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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["STRIKE!"]

THE MYSTIC EYE OF HEATHCOTE.

CHAPTER XVI.

Farewell, remorse: all good to me is lost,
Evil, be thou my good. Milton.

For a breath of time Lady Heathcote stood baffled and undecided, after passing her step-daughter's chamber, her eyes fixed upon the low couch, with its silken coverlid and snowy pillows. Her intended victim was not there! But after a moment her gaze wandered in the direction of the open windows, and there, wrapt in the silver glory of the Italian moonlight, sat Lady Grace, her white night-robe streaming to the floor in artistic folds, her tresses of silken gold rippling and gleaming at every motion of the odorous night breeze; her slender hands clasped as if in supplication, her sweet blue eyes sealed in placid sleep.

For a single instant, as she advanced and looked down upon the almost angelic vision of loveliness, this woman, hardened as she was by continued sin and crime, hesitated, and wavered in her dire purpose. The ruffled night-robe fell apart at the throat, revealing, beneath a mist of lace, the snowy neck and gently heaving bosom.

It was no easy task to stick the poisoned dagger-tip into that white, silken skin, to blight and blacken and destroy all that innocence and beauty. Lady Heathcote hesitated, and even turned back as if to leave the apartment, but all at once a remembrance filled her black eyes with lurid fire, and strung her nerves like steel.

"She stands between me and all I covet on earth," she hissed; "she shall die!"

One rapid step forward, and the glittering dagger flashed and quivered above the unconscious bosom, but, just as the sharp, swift stroke was descending, a sudden blow sent the poisoned weapon hurtling through the open casement, and Lady Heathcote felt her arms pinioned from behind, and herself forced backwards, in a grasp that seemed like steel.

Across the chamber, and through the open aperture by which she had entered, was she thus drawn in a space of time so quick that she scarcely breathed, then the oaken panel slid into its place, and, turning, the amazed and terror-stricken woman faced a bronzed and bearded man, wearing the garb of a seaman in Her Majesty's service.

For one brief instant the two stood silent, eye to eye, then a sharp cry broke from Lady Heathcote's lips. "Good Heaven, Carlos! is it you?" she gasped; "how came you here?"

The young man's blue, blazing eyes never left her guilty face.

"Yes," he answered, solemnly, "it is I, your son; Heaven sent me to save you from the foulest crime that human hand ever committed."

"A demon sent you," she retorted, her terror giving way to a rage that was frightful to see; "you have put yourself in my way, and interfered with my plans, and you remember that I told you long ago that he who dared to do that should die—die! Rash idiot, this intrusion has sealed your own doom! I have hated myself a thousand times for the folly that spared your life years ago, and now—"

"Woman!" cried the youth, catching her by each wrist, and holding her with the grip of a vice, "don't you see that your life is in my hands? What if I reveal the secrets of this night?"

She broke into a laugh that curdled the very blood in his veins.

"You dare not," she hissed, "for I am your mother!"

The young man winced as if from a sudden sword-thrust, and his bearded lips whitened with pain.

"Yes," he replied, "to my sorrow; but mark my words, if ever you lift as much as your finger to harm her," pointing towards the apartment in which Lady Grace still slept, "if ever you cause her a moment's pain or sorrow, I swear that I will reveal all I know, and give you over to the punishment you so richly deserve. If you are my mother the world shall know that you are wicked, cruel—unnatural! As you deal with her so will I deal with you!"

She crouched before him in the shadows, like a wild animal brought to bay, her eyes glowing like balls of fire in the darkness, her white teeth gleaming between her bloodless lips.

"Oh, you ungrateful churl!" she hissed; "that you should come back when I thought you thousands of miles away, and thwart and foil me like this. Boy, if you love your life go out of this house, silently and secretly as you entered it, for if you dare to show your face here at morning light you shall die! You know me, and what I promise I perform."

A footstep in the adjoining chamber warned them that Lady Grace had awakened; and, seizing his mother by the arm, the young man drew her silently and swiftly towards the laboratory from which she had emerged only a short time before. Reaching the door, he pushed her in, and, closing it upon her, he locked it, and, putting the key in his pocket, he made his exit from the house in the same mysterious manner that he had entered it.

A few minutes later he was pacing the grass plot beneath the casement which opened into Lady Grace's chamber, and when the golden dawn-fires kindled in the East he was still at his post.

Lady Heathcote and her guests, assembled at a somewhat late breakfast on the following morning, were inexpressibly startled by the sudden and unannounced entrance of Carlos, whom every one supposed to be at that moment in China.

Of course there were outcries and exclamations, and inquiries without number, in the midst of which the young midshipman stood quiet and smiling, his blue eyes, full of an unspeakable joy, resting on Lady Grace's face.

At first sight of him, in his naval garb, with the beard and bronze that over half a year of travel had added to his boyish face, she uttered a sharp cry; then a swift blush mantled cheek and brow, and her violet eyes fell before his passionate gaze.

Colonel Hershaw, sitting just opposite, watched this meeting between the two young lovers with a stare of genuine surprise, which gradually deepened into a glare of rage, and, in the very midst of the



pleasant and unexpected reunion, he arose abruptly and left the apartment.

Lady Heathcote, calm as a queen, at the head of her table, made room for her son at her right, and insisted on pouring out his chocolate with her own hand. It was such a glad surprise, she said, to have her dear boy back again; and Carlos with a face as quiet as her own bowed gallantly over the jewelled hand that passed his cup.

His sudden appearance was easily explained. Some unknown friend had procured him a commission in the British navy, and he had been transferred from the merchantman bound for Calcutta to one of Her Majesty's war ships, which was under weigh for England.

"And," he added, by way of conclusion, "I was off the moment we touched land. First I ran up to the Abbey, which I found utterly deserted and haunted by ghosts, so the servants averred; then I straightway hurried to join you here."

"Like a good boy," smiled her ladyship as she passed him the muffins; "and when do you go on duty again?"

Lady Grace had longed to ask the question, and she awaited his answer, her lips quivering, the rose hue fluttering on her cheeks.

"I had ten days' furlough," he replied; "four have gone—only six remain. The 'Triton' will sail on the fifteenth."

Only six days!

Lady Heathcote's eyes flashed beneath their black fringes, and poor little Grace, growing white to the very lips, arose and left the room. The young midshipman hurriedly drank his chocolate, and followed her, passing by the Indian officer on his way, who glared after him, uttering an imprecation under his breath.

"If I had dreamed of this, my fine fellow," the colonel muttered as the two happy lovers strolled down the garden walk, "you'd never have got your commission. I thought to give you a little lift, and here it throws you right in my path; so much for my good will and fatherly regard. My rival too! Who ever would have dreamed of such a thing? Here I've been racking my brains to find out what favoured knight had won my little beauty's heart, and he turns out to be my own son! A pretty pass, father and son rivals! Well, my lad, the fault is none of mine. I meant to be quite fatherly in my way, but I cannot brook anything so undutiful and unseemly as this! We must look to it, and see that your next trip takes you a longer journey."

CHAPTER XVII.

False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

Macbeth.

They were all back at Heathcote Abbey, Lady Heathcote and her guests, and Lady Grace too.

The sudden return of Carlos, and the secret influence of Colonel Hernshawe had changed the programme of their proceedings.

Instead of going direct to Paris from Italy, Grace had been permitted to return for a short stay at the Abbey.

Lady Heathcote strenuously opposed this proceeding, but she was no match for the colonel. When he desired a thing done or undone he rarely failed in accomplishing his purpose.

First of all he went to Grace herself. Her health was falling, as every one could see, and she must want to see her old home again before she entered the convent walls.

Would it not be better to return to England for a short visit at least?

Poor, homesick little Grace caught at the suggestion with rapture. There were five precious days and nights that she might live in her lover's presence if this could be!

In the agony of parting she had never dared to dream of such blessedness. But, suggested by the colonel, the idea seemed reasonable.

If she could only—ah! if she only could go back to the dear old Abbey! Would Colonel Hernshawe suggest it to her guardian?

The colonel, grinding his teeth with rage as he thought how much delight the arrangement would give the young midshipman, took the matter in hand.

St. Denys Delmar, though a man somewhat dull of perception and easily ruled, was eminently just and tender. Once brought to regard a thing as being wrong or cruel, he set his face against it like a flint.

The wary Indian officer brought the good man to look upon my lady's course in regard to her step-daughter as being very unkind, to say the least.

"The poor child," said the soft-hearted guardian, "she does look ill, since I come to think of it, and how she must pine for home! To be sure, she shall go back to England, and stay there if it please her. I'm under many obligations to you, my dear colonel, for speaking about the matter."

The colonel went back triumphant, and received a

glance of gratitude from Grace's blue eyes that more than repaid him for his trouble.

Lady Heathcote opposed this change with angry vehemence, but St. Denys was inexorable. He had given his word to the child, and he would not disappoint her. So back to Heathcote they went.

Now the last evening had come.

On the morrow Grace was to start for Paris, and Carlos to return to the "Triton," and the others take their various ways—Colonel Hernshawe to London, the Remingtons back to Remington Court, and my lady and her daughter Beatrice purposed spending a month or two at their house down in Kent prior to joining the Delmar party, who were to pass the summer in Switzerland.

Mrs. Chadwick's sumptuous dinner was over, and Mrs. Chadwick herself, having superintended the putting away of her china and silver, came into the library in answer to Lady Heathcote's summons. Her ladyship reclined amid the cushions of a Turkish couch, but she arose to a sitting posture as the housekeeper entered.

"Well, Chadwick," she said, graciously, "sit down, and let us have a quiet talk. Look that door first, that we may not be interrupted. That will do. Now, to begin, let me have the whole of this silly ghost business from beginning to end."

The housekeeper smoothed out the folds of her black silk dress before she spoke.

"'Tis easy enough to call it a silly business, my lady," she began, in a severe voice, "but calling it silly don't make it so. It's a real serious business, I'm thinking, for here's the very best servants at the Abbey, old and gray headed some of 'em, as have been in the Heathcotes' service all their born days, they're a packing up their things, and begging leave to go, all on account o' these strange doings. Why, if your ladyship will believe me, since you was here in the winter, it's been just as much as I could do to keep 'em together. Even to Jobson, a great stout man, as one would think wouldn't be afraid o' nothing. Why, that night when he first saw it he come into the kitchen, his teeth a chattering, and his face as white as a sheet."

Lady Heathcote shivered, and drew her cashmere shawl around her more closely.

"Saw what?" she said, making a great effort to steady her voice, "for Heaven's sake, Mrs. Chadwick, come to the point, will you? What did Jobson see? What have you all seen?"

"Why, the spectre, madam—the spectre of the Abbey," replied the housekeeper, stolidly, "and it's just the awfulest sight that human eyes ever looked at. I've seen it myself; I was unbelieving enough until I did, and used to scold the maids by the hour for being so foolish; but one night I saw for myself. It was a midwinter night, and snowing and blowing, but Jobson's wife had one of her bad turns, and they sent for me. I went down, and it was hard on to twelve o'clock before I could get away, for she was dreadfully ill, and we had to rub her from head to foot in hot whiskey. As soon as I could get off I threw my shawl over my head, and ran up the western avenue, intending to enter the kitchen by the back way; and I was just passing that clump of fir-trees, where the white statue stands, when I happened to look up, and there it was in the old turret window; it makes my blood run cold to think of it; the whitest face, with eyes like balls of fire, and all about it a circle of bluish light, and it just staring right down upon me."

"There, that will do," interrupted Lady Heathcote, impatiently. "It's likely that when we come to investigate the matter we shall find that we are all being made sport of by some cunning trickster, who, knowing that we are a little superstitious about the old Abbey, is playing upon our fears. How easy it would be for some sly fellow to get himself up in ghostly style, and flit about the place, frightening us all out of our wits."

"All that might be, madam," replied the housekeeper, "but the face I saw was no living face, I'm sure of that."

Lady Heathcote shivered, glancing over her shoulder at the oriel window, as if she half expected to see some spectre face peering through the parted curtains.

"Well, well," she said, "we won't dispute about it, but you are a sensible woman, Mrs. Chadwick, and I'm sure you've not been in the Heathcote family all these years without holding their good name very sacred. They are all gone now, save poor little Grace, and for her sake you and I must silence all these strange stories; it won't do for them to get out. Why, the country folks will fancy that the old Abbey has been the scene of some foul crime. We must try to pacify the servants, and get the matter hushed up. You'll help me, won't you, Mrs. Chadwick?"

The housekeeper smoothed down her black silk again with an air of great self-importance and satisfaction.

She had a good share of vanity, and Lady Heathcote had touched it.

"You may be sure I will, my lady," she replied, "as far as I can."

"I thought so," said her ladyship. "I felt sure you would not desert your post, and break up the household in consequence of an absurd ghost-rumour. I remarked to Grace's guardian that we might rely on you in any emergency. But we'll talk of this some other time before I leave. I want to see if I can do something better for your son too. He's a promising young man, Mrs. Chadwick."

"He's a good lad, madam, though I say it myself."

"Yes. I'll mention the matter to Mr. Delmar at once; and now I wish to ask you about something else. Have you ever heard anything in regard to Nurse Seaton?"

"Not a breath, madam. Her brother was here, as I forgot to mention, while you were in Italy, in search of her; a rude fellow he was too. What do you think? He hinted that she'd been foully dealt with, and threatened to have the matter looked into."

Lady Heathcote laughed, but her lips were deathly white, despite her smothering look and voice.

"Nothing but a ruse," she said. "I've always had my own belief about the matter. Seaton took herself off to her own people, and not empty-handed, we may be sure. I think very strongly of investigating the affair myself. Now, my good Chadwick, you may go; you and I will arrange everything before I leave again, and I'm sure we shall not fall out. Good evening."

The housekeeper courtesied and withdrew, much flattered and gratified, and Lady Heathcote sat down to nerve herself for a task the bare thought of which thrilled her with unspeakable horror.

The dainty little clock on the marble mantel pealed out a silvery chime, the golden splendour of the spring sunset melted into the misty purple of twilight, and still she sat there amid the gorgeous Turkish cushions, her death-white face and glittering eyes wearing a strange, unearthly look.

"It must be done," she muttered, at last, clenching her jewelled hands till the delicate nails grew purple. "I must know, or I shall go mad."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Night, sable goddess! from her ebony throne,
In rayless majesty, now stretches forth
Her leaden sceptre o'er a slumbering world.

Ed. Young.

A GREAT clock in the windy turret struck the midnight hour stroke after stroke, awaking a thousand solemn echoes, and startling the rooks and owls from their slumbers.

Carlos Brignoli was pacing up and down one of the shaded walks that ran beneath the western front of the Abbey, his head bowed and his arms folded across his breast, his tall, finely built form casting huge shadows on the green turf at his feet.

An hour or two previously he had said his last farewell to Lady Grace, for at day-dawn of the morrow Her Majesty's good ship the "Triton" set sail; but, instead of being on his way to the railroad station, this silly young fellow, with the impetuous blood of youth throbbing in his veins, was pacing up and down beneath his lady's window, and repeating to himself every fond word of their parting.

She had come flying down to meet him in the purple dusk, her golden tresses streaming round her like a bright cloud.

"Ah, Carlos, I will be true to you, despite the very command of fate itself," she sobbed, her royal head upon his breast, and her white arms about his neck. "My father's will may forbid me to marry you, but nothing that man can do will ever make me cease to love you."

He kissed her over and over again, and held her to his heart, and whispered in her ear all those fond, foolish things that lovers always say, then, growing white with the agony it cost her, she tore herself from his embrace and fled back to the Abbey.

For hours he had been pacing thus beneath her window, revolving in his mind all the terrible possibilities that crowded her path. They might force her to marry that drunken young earl, in obedience to her father's will, or they might murder her.

He remembered with a thrill of horror that dreadful night when he returned to Brignoli Villa, and, making a secret entrance after an old habit of his boyhood, found himself just in time to defeat the foul crime of murder. The thought of it turned him white and faint.

Was it right for him, the son of such a woman as Lady Heathcote, to aspire to the love of one so pure and spotless and lovely as Grace?

Would it not be nobler, more manly to fly from her presence for ever—to bury himself in some far-off land, and never let her hear his name again? Yet—ah, Heaven, how could he when every throbbing of his passionate heart was a mad cry for her love?

What should he do? Remain at the Abbey, follow her whithersoever she went, and shield her from the terrible danger that menaced her young life? But that would require him to throw up his commission, and to forego all the glorious achievements that his future had in store.

He drew out his watch, and in the moonlight saw that it was near one o'clock. At two precisely the train would leave.

Half mad with agony and irresolution he strode on till he reached that part of the park which fronted the rear wing of the Abbey, which had well nigh fallen into ruins, and had been unused and uninhabited for over half a century.

There were great gray turrets looming up, all draped and overhung with ivy, and immense halls and winding corridors, and ghostly chapels, and below them all, black and gloomy as the bottomless pit itself, there was an old dungeon, whose deep, barred windows looked into the endless waters of the lake.

Years and years before, in the old feudal days, when every rich man in England made his castle a fortress and a stronghold, Heathcote Abbey was looked upon as invincible. It had its towers, its drawbridge, and its dungeon, but in the day in which our story dates all these were useless, and had fallen into decay, and were uninhabited, save by "flitting bat and hooting owl," and by those weird, ghostly personages who might be seen peering, with hollow eyes and pallid visages, through the grated windows, or gliding in trailing white up and down the staircases, and across the tottering drawbridge—so averted the servants—and, indeed, many of the good people who dwelt down about Shreveport and the "Heathcote Arms."

But our young midshipman was thinking of nothing so silly as all this ghost gossip when he turned, with rapid steps, into the gloomiest of the fir avenues; his soul was torn by conflicting emotions; yet, despite all this, his heart gave a quick thrill of something half akin to terror when he chanced to see a faint, fitful light, like the gleam of a taper, in one of the windows of the old dungeon.

Who could be in that gloomy place at such an hour? For a moment, all the old stories he had heard flashing back upon his mind, and curdling the very blood in his veins, the young man stood irresolute, and the next he was dashing down the avenue towards the entrance that led to the dungeon, the fitful light still wavering and flickering before his eyes.

He found the outer door open and swinging on its creaking hinges, and, plunging through, he soon found himself in a mouldy corridor, and wrapped in total darkness.

For fifty yards perhaps he followed the corridor in a straight line, half stifled by the nauseous, reeking atmosphere, and groping in darkness, his footsteps awaking a thousand muffled echoes, and starting a regiment of bats from their dwelling-places.

Presently a sudden glint shot across the black flagstones at his feet, and, just ahead, he saw a crevice on his left, and something like palest moonshine filtering through it. On reaching it he found it to be a door, standing slightly ajar, and in the apartment to which it led there was a light.

Never pausing to calculate upon the risk he might be running, our young hero, trembling from head to foot with eager expectancy, pushed open the door, and passed through into a spacious, cavern-like room, at the far end of which the light that had attracted him glimmered—a small, fitful taper, borne aloft in the hand of a woman.

Yes, it was certainly a woman's figure, dark and spectral in the weird, uncertain light, as it moved slowly forward, and presently disappeared through an aperture which opened into unknown depths beyond. The young man flew on in pursuit, and reached the aperture. A blast of air, chill and deadly as the breath of a charnel-house, rushed up into his face, but, nothing daunted, he pushed on, and found his feet upon the topmost step of a stone staircase, which seemed to lead down into the very bowels of the earth, and, far ahead of him, faint and feeble, like a glimmering star, he caught sight of the taper.

Down he went, clearing three steps at a bound, down till the very air grew thick and foul, and he paused an instant, gasping for breath.

What was it? the evil one himself luring him down to the very lowest depths? But he would not turn back—he must solve the mystery.

On he went, and, presently, the light stood still, and he heard the creak and rattle of rusty hinges.

The spectral figure was not before him now, she had put down her light and was in the act of opening a huge grated door.

Carlos drew nearer, under cover of the darkness, watching her with bated breath. Having succeeded in opening the door, she took up her light and passed through.

Carlos followed in her steps, so near now that he might have touched her black, trailing garments. He

began to feel quite sure that it was no ghost he had been pursuing.

The apartment he entered was spacious, a broad stretch of reeking, slimy flagstones, shut in by four black, black walls.

The figure before him paused again, holding her light aloft, and peering anxiously into every corner, but she found nothing, for the place was utterly deserted, but for a flitting, bat or some loathsome reptile.

Yet she seemed intent upon her search; she lowered her light so that its rays struck upon the black, reeking stones at her feet, and, moving slowly from side to side, searched the place inch by inch.

Carlos, standing in the shadow of the doorway, watched her with a kind of fascination.

When she had made the circuit of the four walls and discovered nothing she threw up her hands with a cry of unutterable dismay and anguish.

"Oh, Heaven!" she wailed, "there's no trace or sign of her; she has made her escape, and I am lost!"

Something in the voice thrilled the young man to his heart's core, and, acting from a sudden impulse, he sprang forward and confronted the wild, death-white face of his own mother!

She uttered a cry that awoke a thousand terrible echoes in the gloomy vaults round them, and the taper fell from her shaking hands and was extinguished.

For one dreadful moment—a moment which in all his after years the young man never forgot—they stood face to face, mother and son, in utter darkness; then, regaining his senses, which for the moment seemed to have deserted him, he took a match from his pocket and rubbed it on his sleeve.

The pale, spectral light showed the woman crouching at his feet, her white face distorted by an agony of terror, and it disclosed something else besides—an other figure, tall and gaunt, robed in trailing white, and a ghostly face. It was advancing straight towards them, throwing its skeleton arms aloft, its hollow eyes seeming to emit a kind of phosphorescent fire.

Lady Heathcote uttered another cry of agonized affright, and, springing at her son, clasped him with all her might.

"Oh, take me out of this terrible place! Oh, for Heaven's sake!" she entreated, "don't leave me!"

But Carlos pushed her aside, and, holding the flickering match aloft, dashed madly towards the advancing specter. But it turned and fled at his approach, looking backward with flaming eyes, and crying, in a sepulchral voice:

"Beware! Beware! Beware!"

Then it vanished, disappearing, so far as the young man could see, through the solid wall. He struck a second match, and, relighting another taper that his mother had thrown down, he examined the wall as closely as possible, to see if he could find any outlet; but in vain. It seemed as solid as the very earth. Half believing that he had in truth penetrated into the bottomless pit, he turned toward the door, and swiftly and silently his mother followed him—up the long staircase, through the reeking halls and winding corridors, and, at last, out into the open air. In the fir avenue they stood face to face.

"Now," began the young man, his eyes blazing ominously, "I want to know what carried you down there, and you may as well speak at once, for I will know!"

For answer, her white face flashing out all at once with deadly purpose, she snatched a slender dagger from her bosom and drove it towards his heart with a fierce and well-directed blow. But his quick arm arrested and received it, and it spent its fury in a harmless flesh wound. Maddened by the pain he caught her arm, and wrested the dagger from her hand.

"Now, then," he panted, holding her wrists in his steel-like grasp, "I want to know what carried you down yonder? Out with it, or I'll hand you over to the public authorities before to-morrow's sunrise!"

But she laughed in his face.

"Suppose I throw back the question in your teeth!" she sneered. "What carried you down, sir? Why are you prowling about at this hour of the night? I am mistress here, and have a right to explore every nook and cranny; but you—what are you?"

"The miserable son of an unnatural mother!" replied the young man, breaking in upon her words. "Heaven help me! Woman, headless, bitterly, letting her wrists drop from his grasp, and staggering back a pace or two, "why didn't you strangle me at my birth, and spare me all this shame and torture?" Her black eyes flashed in the pallid moonlight.

"Because it did not suit my purpose," she hissed. "I meant to be quite motherly and affectionate had you kept to yourself; but you have dared to meddle with my plans to thwart and disappoint me, and you shall have your reward. I warned you, and you would

not take heed; but you shall repent it—you shall rue the very hour you were born."

"I have done that a thousand times already!" sighed the young man, his eyes wandering to the light that still burned in Lady Grace's window.

The mad woman before him eyed the dagger in his hands with a kind of wistful longing.

"It would do me good to kill you!" she continued—"to strike you down at my feet! Why could you not have kept out of my way? The world is wide—could not you go your way, and leave me to mine?"

"No!" he thundered. "Leave you to your way! Leave you to murder Lord Heathcote's daughter in order to secure her wealth for yourself! I tell you, woman, if you ever attempt it again—if ever you harm even so much as a hair of her head—you shall suffer the full penalty of the law, though you were ten thousand times my mother!"

"My dear, dutiful boy," she said, her black eyes blazing with wicked exultation; "I've a little bit of news for you before we part, a precious secret that would never have been revealed if he had been wise enough to keep out of my path. I warned you that if you meddled with my plans you should have your reward. 'Tis coming! You fancy yourself the son of Count Brignoli, heir to his title, and to Brignoli Villa! My dear boy, you are your mother's son, but you are a beggar and a child of shame. Look at your Saxon face if you doubt what I say. Be sure and make my Lady Grace acquainted with your pedigree. You'll make a fine husband for the last of the Heathcotes! Ha, ha, ha!" and, laughing wildly, and tossing her arms aloft like a mad creature, she fled down the fir avenue and disappeared.

Carlos stood like one stunned by a sharp blow; for a moment the black fir trees and the grim old Abbey seemed to swim and reel before his eyes; his very reason threatened to desert him. Just then the iron tongue high up in the windy turret struck the hour, and at the same moment, far across the misty downs, came the shrill whistle of the locomotive. He heard it, and without an instant's hesitation, or even a backward glance, he cleared the park enclosure with a few flying bounds, and when the long train swept round the circle of the purple hills he stood upon the platform in an agony of pain and impatience; before another sunset he was on board the "Triton" and far out at sea.

CHAPTER XIX.

Oh, love—oh, fire—once he drew
With one long kiss my whole soul through
My lips, as sunlight drinketh dew. A. Tennyson.

THE good people at Heathcote Abbey were not dreaming of getting up when Colonel Harnshaw mounted his pet mare and started out for a ride. The colonel was a man of excellent habits; the sun never caught him in bed. And this morning was his last one at Heathcote, and the colonel was making a kind of inventory after his own fashion, so he started out for a long ride.

A gentle wind stirred the branches of the oaks and firs that lined the stately avenues of the old Abbey as the colonel rode out from under them.

A noble and wealthy domain was this heritage of Heathcote; far away over the English hills stretched the broad lands which owed that slender, golden-haired girl for mistress.

The Indian officer brought his Arabian to a dead halt, and fairly gasped for breath as the full weight of the thing filled his mind. All this he pondered, sweeping the surrounding country with his eagle glance, all this wealth and honour, and the handsomest woman in broad England with it. Then he took an ivory tablet from his pocket and wrote, "Colonel Ludovic Harnshaw Heathcote, Lord of Heathcote Abbey."

"Ah, my colonel," he soliloquized then, "it won't do to miss that chance; no matter what the cost may be, the winning will amply repay you."

Whereupon, turning his horse's head, he galloped back, reaching the Abbey just in time for breakfast.

St. Denys and his daughter were at the table, and the young Lord of Remington, and my Lady Beatrice and her betrothed husband, but Lady Heathcote and Lady Grace had not yet left their rooms, both being slightly indisposed. The colonel sat down and broke his egg, and munched his French roll in moody silence.

"My dear colonel, one would think you had lost your last friend," remonstrated the sprightly Maud; "why are you so gloomy?"

"Ah, Miss Maud," replied the colonel, "I cannot be otherwise than gloomy when in an hour or two I shall turn my back to the sunshine, and my eyes to smoky London and my miserable bachelor quarters; and after that the Indian jungles again and my soldier's tent beneath the midnight stars. Not an enrapturing prospect certainly, Mistress Maud!"

"My dear colonel," continued the young lady

arching her lovely head coquettishly, "you should abandon all that and take unto yourself a wife. A man with your fine social abilities wandering about like a Bedouin, why, 'tis absolutely sinful."

"Indeed, I agree with you, Miss Delmar," laughed the colonel; "and I've made up my mind to mend my ways. After this trip I think I shall throw up my commission, and lead a better life. But I've become such a bear; what with company in the jungles, and drinking bitter ale in the saloons of Calcutta, I'm scarcely what you fair ones would fancy, I'm thinking."

"Don't have a fear, colonel; we women dote on bears—anything in the world sooner than a smooth-tipped, simpering fop."

The colonel bowed profoundly.

"Ah, sweet Mistress Maud," he said, "how you encourage me. I was fancying that my near and yellow head had come, but I may yet enjoy the April morn and primrose bloom of love! Who knows? Just the least bit more sugar in my chocolate, please!"

Maud took the silver sugar-spoon in her dainty white fingers, and dropped a second lump in the exquisite china cup. The others had left the table, and she was lingering to entertain the colonel. He possessed a subtle kind of fascination, this bronzed and bearded Indian officer.

Just at this moment a servant entered, bearing a silver tray, upon which was an embossed card, which he presented to the colonel. Traced upon it in delicate lines were these words:

"Come to me in the green boudoir. Carlotta."

As he read it the officer frowned and bit his lip, but the moment after he smiled blandly.

"My lady commands, and I must obey," he said, rising from the table, and taking a cigar from his dainty mother-of-pearl case. "Au revoir, Mistress Maud; I shall be seeking you presently to make my adieux. How the moments fly! 'Tis ten already, and this is our last day at Heathcote."

Maud Delmar with an expression of wistful sadness in her brown eyes watched him as he sauntered from the breakfast-parlour.

"A fine, fascinating man," she soliloquized, beating her satin boot upon the carpet; "I believe I could fall in love with him if I dared. But it wouldn't do; mamma would never listen to it; she says he sheathes the tiger's talons beneath that sweet, velvet softness; and she may be right—ay, colonel, she may be right."

Pretty Maud went off to the grand drawing-room, trilling a little air that was half sad and half mocking in its sweetness.

Meanwhile the colonel made a few turns up and down the terrace, puffing away at his cheroot; then he threw it away, and, ascending the great-oaken staircase, made his way towards the green boudoir. It was one of a long suite of sumptuous rooms in the southern wing of the Abbey.

A French girl threw open the door at the officer's approach, receiving a chuck under her dimpled chin, and a very warm glance for her pains. Adèle simpered, and the colonel passed in.

It was an apartment all gold and glitter, with rich, grassy green carpets and cushions of turf-like velvet, couches of green satin, embroidered with gold, and tables of ormolu and mother-of-pearl, and great flashing mirrors, reflecting all this sumptuous beauty in redoubled splendour.

Through a glass door that led from the boudoir into a fragrant greenhouse Lady Heathcote appeared as the colonel entered. Her raven hair, surmounted at the temples by a scarlet turban, above which glittered a starry diadem of diamonds, flowed almost to her feet in waving masses; her robe of green velvet, open from the throat and bordered with soft, scarlet fur, revealed a bodice and petticoat of vivid scarlet, all starred with glowing gems; even the slippers on her dainty feet glittered with jewels.

The officer stood like one amazed as she advanced to meet him.

"Well-a-day, my pretty gentleman!" she cried, extending her jewelled hand; "won't you let me tell your fortune?"

"Why, Carlotta!" he gasped, at last, passing his hand across his eyes like one in a dream, "what does all this mean?"

"Why, nothing, sir, only I fancied that my colonel was growing forgetful, and I want to make him remember. Just make believe now that we are young again, and this is Lislewood Heath."

The officer's bronzed face grew purple, and the veins in his temples swelled up like cords.

"Nonsense," he muttered; "why should we bring up the follies of the past, Carlotta?—let by-gones be by-gones."

"Follies?" she cried, her voice shrill, and her black eyes burning like living coals. "Something worse than follies, I think, we are anxious to forget! Ha, ha!—isn't it so, my brave colonel? We don't

wish to remember Lislewood Heath, and that black stream that runs below, and the white face that looked up at us that night, stark and cold and dead!"

The colonel's face changed from purple to ashen white, and he made a step forward, his right hand raised as if to strike.

"Woman, beware!" he said, his voice thick and hoarse with passion; "don't urge me too far!"

The beautiful creature before him broke into a wild laugh.

"What will you do, my brave soldier?" she cried, mockingly.

For answer he drew a slender, shining dagger just far enough from its hiding-place in his bosom to show the tip of its golden handle. She bared her jewelled bosom before him.

"Strike if you dare!" she cried, the crimson leaping to her cheeks, and her breath coming in gasps. "Plunge your dagger to the hilt. Would to Heaven you had done so twenty years ago; it would have spared me many a bitter heart-ache, many a black crime. Ah, Ludovic Hershaw, what a pitiful coward you are, and what a weak fool I am to love you!"

He put the dagger out of sight, and, catching her by both wrists, held her fast, his gray eyes transfixing her with their mesmerizing gaze.

"Come, Carlotta," he said, "we've had enough of this silly melodrama. We are too old for such foolery; let us be sensible and forget these disagreeable things, and—"

"No, I won't forget!" she shrieked, wrenching herself free, and glaring upon him like an enraged maniac. "I am old now—my youth has gone, and it was you who blighted it. I might have been a queen still, free and happy, as I was the day you first found me, but for your false promises."

"You are Lady Heathcote," he replied, significantly.

"Yes, I have done the work you put into my hands. I am Lady Heathcote; and Ludovic Hershaw, when you return from India I shall be mistress of Heathcote Abbey, waiting to make you its lord—you remember our contract?"

"Assuredly, and I shall be ready to comply with my part of it. If you are mistress of Heathcote I will make you my wife. And this ends the play; we'll drop the curtain. I must bid your ladyship good morning, and good-bye—the London train goes out in half an hour."

She looked at his cold, cruel face, and her own softened. With all her wicked pride she was a woman, soft-hearted and submissive to the man she adored. The tears gathered in her black eyes.

"And this is our parting, Ludovic?" she faltered.

"Ah, me, how unlike the partings in those old days."

Colonel Hershaw could scarcely repress his annoyance, yet he was touched by the woman's passionate fondness.

But her power over him had gone for ever; he marvelled within himself as he thought of the passion that boiled in his veins when he first loved the beautiful gipsy queen of Lislewood Heath. All that was a half-forgotten dream.

"Ah, well, Carlotta," he replied, quietly, "we are growing old, as I said before; that's the reason the fever in one's blood soon burns out. Good-bye!"

He held out his hand; she clasped it in both of hers, and burst into a storm of passionate weeping.

"Oh, Ludovic," she sobbed, "it kills me to see you go—we may never meet again, and I love you so. Yes, I love you; though you have trampled my heart beneath your feet, and made me what I am, I love you! I would barter my soul to serve you. Won't you kiss me, Ludovic?"

The colonel's steel-gray eyes softened, in pity perhaps, for this woman whom he had once loved.

"Why, yes, you silly child," he said; and, taking her face in his hands, he kissed her repeatedly.

Lady Heathcote sank down amid her velvet cushions in a ecstasy of passionate bliss, all her wild blood thrilling like fire through her veins; and the colonel strode down to the drawing-room, feeling a trifle remorseful and irresolute.

But there he met with Lady Grace, looking so calm and cool and imperial, in her young loveliness, so wholly unlike the stormy woman he had just left, that the sight of her put all his irresolution to flight.

"I'm an idiot," he muttered, under his breath, "to let that tiger-cat move me so. I must shake her off—bah! the bare thought of her is disgusting with that 'queen of the rose-bud, garden of girls,' before one's eyes. Little one, you shall make me lord of the Abbey."

A dainty French clock struck the hour. He started forward with an exclamation of surprise and regret.

"Lady Grace," he said, "I come to say good-bye

—my time's up. In ten minutes I shall be on my way to London—in a week I shall sail for India. Will you quite forget me, my little girl?"

"Why, no, colonel," she replied, raising her innocent eyes to his face, "of course I shall not. When shall you return?"

"In a year or two."

"Well, I shall be home again then. You'll come to the Abbey?"

"I shall come to the Abbey," he answered, significantly, "you may be sure of that, and I will write to you when I have gone. I'm your true friend, you'll remember, and, lest you should not, I want you to wear this as a reminder till I return. Will you?"

He drew a ring from his vest pocket, and slipped it on her finger; it was a heavy ring of red Indian gold, set with one great flashing ruby. Then he raised her hands to his lips, and the next instant he had gone.

"What is it?" questioned the young Lord of Remington, coming to her side.

But Lady Grace declined to answer.

(To be continued.)

SCIENCE.

COATING WITH ZINC.—According to M. Böttiger copper or brass may be given a firmly adherent zinc coating by the following method:—Finely divided or powdered zinc, in a non-metallic vessel, is covered with a concentrated sal-ammoniac solution; this is heated to boiling, and the articles of copper or brass, properly cleansed, are introduced. A few minutes suffice to produce a firm and brilliant coating. The requisite fineness of the zinc is produced by pouring the molten metal into a mortar and triturating the same until it solidifies.

HOW TO FASTEN RUBBER TO WOOD AND METAL.—As rubber plates and rings are nowadays used almost exclusively for making connections between steam and other pipes and apparatus, much annoyance is often experienced by the impossibility or imperfection of an air-tight connection. This is obviated entirely by employing a cement which fastens alike well to the rubber and to the metal or wood. Such cement is prepared by a solution of shellac in ammonia. This is best made by soaking pulverized gum shellac in ten times its weight of strong ammonia, when a slimy mass is obtained, which in three to four weeks will become liquid, without the use of hot water. This softens the rubber, and becomes, after volatilization of the ammonia, hard and impermeable to gases and fluids.

IMPROVEMENT IN THE MANUFACTURE OF SUGAR.

MESSES. GEORGE A. DRUMMOND and Thomas Sterry Hunt, of Montreal, Canada, have just obtained a patent, through the Patent Agency, for a process of removing iron or other injurious metal from sugar. For this purpose they employ a mono sulphide of one of the alkaline earths, such as calcium, strontium, or barium, in conjunction with sulphate of magnesia.

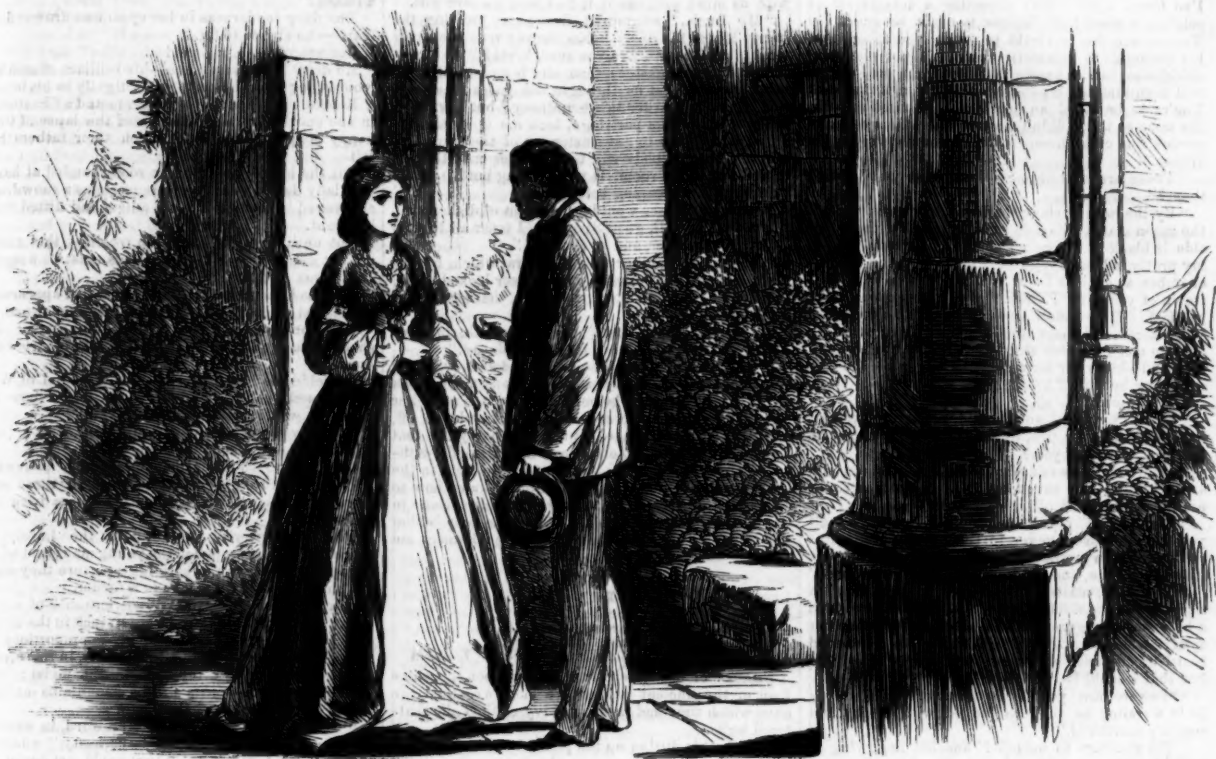
To the solution of sugar, or the syrup, milk of lime is added so as to make it slightly alkaline. Then the prepared sulphide of barium, calcium, or strontium, either in powder, or, by preference, dissolved in water, is added, thoroughly stirring the whole at the temperature of between 100 and 150 deg. Fah.

If the solution now gives a dark colour to paper moistened with acetate of lead, the quantity of sulphide is sufficient. If not, more must be added. A quantity of sulphate of magnesia in solution is then added, at the rate of one and a half pounds for every pound of sulphide of barium, or for every half-pound of sulphide of calcium. The whole is thoroughly incorporated and heated.

A small quantity of blood or albumen facilitates subsequent filtration. The whole is now passed through a filter, and is then ready for the subsequent process of refining. The amount of sulphide to be used will depend upon the impurity of the sugar or syrup, but will not exceed, in most cases, two or three pounds of sulphide of barium, or about half that quantity of the sulphide of calcium, to the ton of sugar.

The theory of the process is as follows:—The iron or other metal held in solution as oxide in the syrup is converted by the sulphide of the alkaline earth into sulphide, which is insoluble. The subsequent addition of the sulphate of magnesia converts any excess of the alkaline sulphurets into a very unstable sulphide of magnesium, while the barytes, if used, is separated as a wholly insoluble sulphate, which, with the sulphide of iron, etc., is separated by filtration.

The process may be varied somewhat to suit circumstances, and the ordinary apparatus of sugar refining is usually quite sufficient to carry it out effectually.



[A LAST MEETING.]

VICTOR AND VANQUISHED.

CHAPTER XII.

Shakespeare.

I never knew a woman love man so. THE three days of Hereward's captivity were drawing to a close.

Now would he be released from his parole. Now would his lawyer arrive with the papers which established his rights.

Now would the usurper be forced to give up his long-kept booty.

Hereward, once liberated, would reveal himself to the Kentigern people, display his proofs, and, backed by night, as well as right, would demand and gain his own.

But Lucia?

Must she suffer with her father? Must she be covered with his shame?

Beyond this question the love-swayed youth had not yet advanced.

Watt Slygreen, unvisited by any softer passion than solicitude about his master's appetite, complained loudly of the ravages which the tender passion was making upon him through Mademoiselle Gabrielle's chains; but, at the same time, took care to keep himself informed of all that passed inside the Tower. He was burdened with news, therefore, when he sought his master, about the setting of the sun, and mysteriously closed the door.

"You should have listened to me, master," began he, plaintively, "and have escaped while you had the chance."

"What now, Raven?"

"Lumber's been a-going it. I tell you what—between him and the old one there's been mischief brewing, mark my words."

"Another of your wonders, Watt? Why should you insist upon keeping my ears perpetually filled? Go confide your marvels to Gabrielle."

"A murrain on Gabrielle; this is no time for mirth, master. I believe we're dished. Lumber's turned the tables on me and is likely to win the day. Haven't I been robbed of the little souvenire I had been presented with? I had them stowed away in that old hunting-horn hanging up there, until we should be going; and when I came to look last evening didn't I find the silver inkstand and snuffers gone? Doesn't that mean that Lumber is even with me?"

"Heaven send me enough money to buy you another pair, for indeed your wit wants snuffing."

"Wit?" screamed the little man, stamping about, "is it wit you want when the old fox has his claws in your backbone?"

"Peace! peace!" said Hereward, surprised to see his agitation, "what has occurred?"

"Mr. Lumber has been away yesterday and today," whispered Watt; "and at first, thinks I, he's sacked, and I've got rid of our spy, but when I saw that blessed hunting-horn empty I knew better, and was sure he had gone and made it all straight with the baron, and was on secret service; so I asked Mademoiselle Gabrielle, as if I was jealous of him, and she said he was all right with his lordship—that she knew, but where he was she didn't know. Well, master, he only came home an hour ago, with his face as white as a sheet and a cowardly look in his eyes. I know what that means—and Gabrielle says he gave a packet to the baron, which he was overjoyed to get."

"I confess you have alarmed me, Watt; what packet could it have been?"

"It's queer that Mr. Cavendish hasn't come yet, isn't it, Master Hereward? He should have arrived this afternoon."

"Good Heavens! Slygreen, you don't suspect—"

"Yes, master, I do; and, if all the papers are in the old villain's hands, you're as good as dead."

"Mr. Cavendish would never give them up."

"I've seen eyes and eyes, and the Frenchman's eyes meant murder!"

The youth blanched a little.

"Cavendish will arrive to-night to confound your prophecies," said he, very gravely. "I would be loth to think the baron capable of such treachery."

"Don't deceive yourself, master," besought the servant, "but keep your eyes about you, especially when that butchering valet comes nigh you!"

Saying this, Watt vanished as suddenly as he had appeared, probably intent upon making new discoveries.

The youth could not help feeling much disturbed. Should Chastelard have gained knowledge of the messenger whom he expected, and by foul means have possessed himself of the papers, Hereward felt that his cause was lost.

But in spite of Watt's forebodings he could not believe such a catastrophe probable. He resolved to bring matters to a crisis when they met at dinner.

He would remind the baron that the three days had expired, and demand his liberty.

Chastelard would then be forced to reveal his intentions.

While he dressed then with a care which showed his solicitude to please Miss Chastelard, his countenance assumed a stern and determined air, which also showed his intentions towards the baron.

The dinner was, as usual, sumptuous to the last degree; the lady charming: the baron in his place—which is all that could be said of him, as he took no part in the conversation and ate nothing.

When Lucia had retired Hereward said:

"Has the Duke de Chamourel communicated with you, my lord?"

Chastelard set down his glass untasted, and looked at the youth.

"If he has not," continued Hereward, careless of this fishy glare, "I regret your disappointment, but must remind you that the three days of my imprisonment are over."

"Not until twelve o'clock to-night," said the baron, with a crooked smile.

"You will then give me my liberty?"

"Sir! Your liberty?"

"Baron, I must insist upon hearing your intentions with regard to me. Am I to be imprisoned here?"

"Not if the Duke de Chamourel claims you for a son."

As Hereward marked the smothered look of hatred in the old man's eyes he began to fear that Watt's suspicions were correct.

"I am expecting a friend to join me here, who will satisfy you fully as to my identity," said the young man, with a keen scrutiny of his antagonist.

"Ah, yes!" cried Chastelard, gulping down his wine. "When do you expect your friend?"

"He should have been at the village by noon to-day."

Baron Chastelard strove to conceal the exultation which his horrible face expressed, but he could not.

He rose hastily from the table, but not until Hereward had seen and read aright that look, which declared that he was known.

"We will wait for the arrival of your friend," said the baron, presently; "and until then you must be content to remain my guest."

The youth bowed and retired.

Soon after entering his own chamber he heard the voice of his attendant.

"A word with you, master."

He turned and beheld Watt, advancing on tiptoe, his eyes gleaming like glow-worms. His face was gray as ashes, yet he was not without his triumph.

"I thank Heaven on behalf of my long ears," whispered he, catching hold of those members with both hands and stretching them like the prodigious wings of a bat; "for if it hadn't been for them you'd be a dead man to-night."

"What new peril now, Watt?"

"Do you want to know the reason why old Iscarlot

hasn't made mincemeat of you before this? Because I've found it out. He's expecting a detachment of soldiers to come from Rothes to-night to guard the Tower, and he is afraid to touch you in spite of his houseful of retainers until he's got plenty to shield him, for he knows that the Kentigorne people will burn him and his for butchering you, if they can. You're to be called an insurgent and killed as such, the same as if he didn't know you're Henry Kentigorne's son, come home to make him answer for his crimes."

"These are evil tidings—how have you learned them?"

"By the help of claws and ears. You see, though the moon makes this side as light as day the other side is black as a friar's frock; and I took a run up my pretty ladder of ivy to the window of the dining-chamber, as soon as I saw you go upstairs with that frown of yours, for I knew that something was to be gleaned. The window was a little open, as doubtless you noticed, and there stood the baron with his ugly back to me, and there stood his daughter in front of him, and—bless her for a true Kentigorne—she was defending her kith."

"What, me?"

"By St. Nicholas! you! And, master, never call me blockhead after this, for haven't I said from the first that she loved you?" "Twas thus:

"But, father, he is an honourable gentleman and a true knight. He saved my life. Does that count nothing with you?"

"Confusion!" piped the baron; "if you know all you wouldn't be so eager to befriend the traitor. I have proofs in my hands that he meant to steal this Tower from me, and, by Heaven, he shall die for it!"

"Mark that, master. The lawyer's papers, as I'm a pious Christian. But Miss Chastelard didn't flinch a bit; she only gazed in her father's face, with her eyes like stars, until he tugged at his dead-coloured beard in desperation; and by-and-bye she says, so low that I could but just hear it:

"Beware how you injure a hair of his head. If he is a traitor he shall be judged with equity, not secretly murdered."

"Do you dare to meddle?" snarled he, trying to hold his own.

"Yes, father," says she, calmly; "because you fling disgrace upon us Chastelards, because your cruelties have changed your heart and made you less than human, because I owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Hereward and must defend him, I meddle."

"I must break your spirit, madame," says the old fox, shaking all over with rage, "and teach you what you seem to have forgotten, who is master of this Tower."

"I am ready for the lesson!" flashes she, making him quail; "and when I find him do dishonour to his position, and shame my father, I shall leave his rule. I'll have no assassin for a sire!"

"At this she happened to catch sight of me—I suppose I made myself too visible, in my eager interest—and after gazing a moment she recognized me. Heaven bless her, she's as sharp as she's brave! She flushed crimson, to be overheard talking thus to her father, but made a rapid sign to me, and instantly left the room.

"I waited long enough to see Chastelard ring for his servant, and Lumber enter, grinning like a jackal, which shows what good friends they are; then, though I'd have liked well to hear what was going to be said, I had to slip out of sight, for fear the valet would catch me at it. Then I made my way to where doubtless you would have been more in place—the lady's private parlour.

"She was waiting for me at the door, and her eyes were full of tears—egad! I never felt so queer, master—and says she:

"Are you to be trusted? Are you faithful to him?"

"There," says I, "look at me now. These arms held him many a night long gone, when the watch-fires burned without and the fever burned within the tents, where his brave father lay wounded, and would they work for anybody else now?—for you see I never thought of the Duke de Chamoulet until 'twas out. But she gave a little smile though her face was pale, and seemed to believe me on the spot.

"Tell him, then, to escape from my father to-night," she said, "for his life is in danger!"

"Then she told me about the soldiers that were expected, and that you were to be judged as a traitor, and have a traitor's doom; and she said that she would help us to get away safely, and that you must not be too proud to accept life at her hands, who owed hers to you, even though you were guiltless of the crimes ascribed to you; and, so saying, her tears began to flow again, and she gave me this for you, saying it was but a poor remembrance of one who never would forget you, but it might be useful."

Saying which Watt cautiously displayed an embroidered sheath, from which he drew a small jewelled

dagger, of exquisite workmanship, and tendered it with as much pride as if it had been his own gift.

"My Lucia," murmured Hereward, pressing the dainty hilt to his lips. "Did she say that she never would forget me? Are you sure, Watt?"

"That I am, master; then she began to tell me that she would get us through the gates in safety, and bribe the warder to see nothing; but I winked, and she, quick as a partridge, took me up at once.

"I know how to get master out of the Tower," I told her, "and nobody will be the wiser until they go to find him in his room. It was nothing but his parole kept him from escaping before."

"And my father would accuse him of dishonour!" she sighed. "Well, good Slygreen, I trust all to you. Guard your master, and so farewell!"

"And, with another flow of tears, which, by my faith, seemed the holiest things I ever looked upon, she left me. Now, master, we'll take the secret passage to-night."

"I must see Lucia first!" cried the youth, impetuously—"I must thank her for her kindness!"

"Why, yes, master," assented the dwarf, who had been hoping for this proposal to be made, for reasons of his own; "it would be but an ill return to make her for all her favours to snatch at them and run off, dog-like, without thanks. It is not unlikely but that I may find it impossible to leave my Gabrielle without a farewell; so, while you wait for the lady in the broken ruins of the Tower—I think I know how to send her to you—I'll be wooing my mademoiselle in the kitchen. At twelve o'clock be at the door behind the sacristy, in the chapel, and you'll meet me there."

CHAPTER XIII.

Alas for her that met me,
That heard me softly call,
In the garden by the turrets
Of the old manorial hall.

Tennyson.

SHAFTS of broken silver light lay upon the stone floor of the ancient hall, where moss wreathed the gaps which time had made, and ivy clothed the shattered walls.

Who is this fitting up the paved length, glittering like a seraph as she crosses the light—gray, like a shadow, as she crosses the blackness?

Hereward goes to meet her, with the fire which is so new in his bold, blue eyes; he seizes her small hand and paces with her the old hall until they reach a broken window casement.

Here he can gaze upon the lady's quivering face—upon her tearful eyes which weep for him—and mark the trembling of her lovely frame.

She was richly attired, as became a baron's daughter and her own white, stately loveliness. Her dress of deep crimson brocade swept, train-like, upon the ground, and, as she walked, opened in the front to display a petticoat of glistening white satin, and shoes of crimson velvet buckled with brilliants.

Her neck and arms were draped with exquisite black lace, through which some jewels flashed, star-like; and, round her milk-white throat ran a ruby necklace, which flashed like tiny flames of fire with every movement.

Her hair seemed to emit infinitesimal sparks as the moon shone on it, for it was dressed with diamond powder. Vivid, radiant as a bird of paradise, this incomparable lady appeared to Hereward.

"My kind Lucia de Chastelard!" murmured the youth, "how can I ever repay this?"

She answered him only by turning her back to the window, and looking up with a long, earnest scrutiny into his face.

The youth poured out some words, he scarcely knew what, but passionate and fond they were; and for a moment the lady seemed to listen, then her face sank between her hands—she wept.

"My dear, dear lady, have I offended you?" cried Hereward.

Then he started back. Was he mad to sue for the love of Chastelard's daughter?

"I have looked in your eyes, and find only goodness there," breathed Lucia, calming herself, "yet, alas! how my father has misjudged you! Fly, my dear and true knight, while you have time, and save yourself, for my—"

She shuddered and turned sadly away.

"Madame, hear my story, and judge for yourself, if love be not possible between us!"

"No—no! I must not listen! There may be spies, and your danger is great. Farewell, Hereward!"

"I cannot part from you yet! You must not listen—why?"

"Imprudent one, begone!"

"My love—my love, one look to tell me that the future is not death!"

She flashed round upon him, her lovely cheeks rose flushing.

"If my love could save you—if my devotion could

be of service—ah! you too exacting boy, I will say no more!"

The deep tenderness in her eyes was drowned in tears—she strove to fly.

But not yet—oh, not yet!

He drew her towards him—his brilliant glance devoured her face; he clasped her tightly to his breast.

Behold them, then, a Kentigorne and a Chastelard in one another's arms, oblivious of the lapse of time, happy in spite of the hate which their fathers had felt.

But the hoarse cawing of a rook sounded at hand. The lady darted back, becoming pale as a snowdrop; she waved her hand in a sad adieu, and flitted from his sight.

Not until then did the youth recollect that rooks are not wont to caw at night. This must be a signal, and it was already midnight.

How had the time fled since Lucia had appeared. Beloved Lucia! she should be his—somewhere.

Hereward stood through the thicket of the shadows to the chapel, gained the sacristy, tried the door.

It yielded to his touch, the leathery hand of Watt Slygreen clasped his, and drew him in. There the darkness was intense.

"Follow after me, master," muttered Watt; "and whatever you see keep quiet until we're safe."

Obedient to this unpromising speech, Hereward allowed the dwarf to lead him through those subterranean passages which have elsewhere been described.

The overpowering atmosphere, the impalpable obscurity, almost stupefied the young man; and when, squeezing through a crumbling aperture they stood still, he thought he must be in a dream.

They were in the tunnel-like entrance of a vast cave; a hundred blue torchlights, stuck in the niches of the rocks, showed its immense proportions; a multitude of figures—silent, mysterious, in this mystic place—were huddled together in the midst; they looked like some spirits of the mountains at their orgies in the bowels of the earth.

"What is this?" whispered Hereward, in wonder.

"Now, master, you're not to be hasty," wheedled Watt; "but I didn't know that you'd get out of the old griffin's claws at all, so I made bold to run down to the village, while you waited for the lady in the hall; and I was welcomed back with such joy that I thought it not amiss to tell them what had become of you, and they massed from all quarters, and followed me in here to rescue you."

"You rascal, you have betrayed to them the secret passage!"

"Hush, hush, sir, while I explain. We did search it—that is, they did with their torches—most thoroughly up to this cave. How could I prevent them when they kept me in sight from the moment I entered the village? They were for coming through the whole way, but I persuaded them to stay until I should reconnoitre; so they are waiting patiently for us to come back. Now, master, if you would only give them something to do."

"I knew that was at the bottom of it!" exclaimed Hereward, flushing with annoyance. "You want me to sanction by my presence the murdering of yonder wretched old man. Do you think so meanly of me, Watt?—so meanly of your general's son?"

"Master Hereward," burst out the man, white with the sharpness of his young master's rebuke, "you've a right to your own; and you ought to have all the restitution you can get. If you don't use might how are you to get the Tower?"

"Not by midnight assassination, Watt."

"Who goes there?" cried a voice, the owner of which tried to pierce the obscurity of the tunnel by thrusting in his head as far as he could.

"Friends!" answered Hereward, coming forward.

The scout stared at the advancing youth, his rough features changing from suspicion to astonishment and delight; then he seized his arm, and led him toward the torches, shouting:

"Here's the captain; hurrah! here's the captain!"

The multitude turned tumultuously to see, gazed from beneath their hat-brims, rocked with a convulsive motion, surged like a wave around him, and, in a twinkling, had him lifted shoulder-high in their centre.

"Hurrah!" roared they, until the cellular vaults rang again and again, and the torches flickered in their adamant sockets.

"Hurrah! Captain Hereward's got free!"

Astonished at this mighty welcome, the youth could only wait until they should give his voice a chance to be heard.

He gazed round upon them from his human throne, like a young Viking of olden time, and his heart swelled towards them.

His father's people—his own—thus ignorantly putting themselves under his rule, all unconscious of his right to be their chief.

He marked their haggard faces, their starved looks, their desperate mien, and vowed within himself to make their cause his own.

"Comrades!" shouted he.

"Hurrah!" yelled they, tossing up their caps in tenfold enthusiasm.

"Captain Hereward'll give us our rights!"

"He'll lift the taxes!"

"He'll avenge poor Hood!"

The wild, prolonged "Hurrah!" pouring from a hundred frantic throats, seemed to roll with myriad echoes from vault to vault of the secret passage, which was in fact a chain of caves, until the earth trembled. Each man drew forth his concealed weapons and brandished them exultantly, then, with the quick change from one extreme of feeling to another, these half-delirious men melted into hoarse sobbing.

"My comrades," cried Hereward, again, "cheer up, cheer up! Tut, would you lose heart now when Hereward is among you? You talk of avenging Hood—where is he?"

"In his grave," wailed an old man; "and was the last of 'em."

"Dead!" ejaculated the youth.

"Ay!" answered the veteran, trembling-voiced, "drowned like a dog! I had four of them once, but two died of starvation, and one was shot for not lifting his hat; and now my last boy was tied hand and foot, and dropped from a cell in the Tower into the sea. Chastelard did it all."

A complete silence succeeded this communication; every eye watched eagerly the countenance of their leader, which had become stern as a fate.

An indignation which was furious now burned in the young man's heart; it seemed to him that he must, for the sake of these despairing people, avenge their sufferings, and drag the tyrant from his pedestal of power before another day should dawn.

Lucia from his mind—only the wrongs of his father's people could away him now.

"Yes, I'll give you your rights!" shouted he, in ringing tones; "I'll lift your taxes—I'll help you to avenge Hood's murder!"

"Heaven bless you, captain!"

"For who ought to care for you as I do? I'm your own baron's son—I'm Hereward Kentigorne!"

Not a face there but became chalk-pale with astonishment at this announcement, as they stared, a statue-like throng, upon him, unable to believe their ears.

Hark! what is this comes into their midst?

There is a flash—a report, a ball whizzes, and young Hereward is no longer to be seen upon his human throne.

Panic-stricken, the insurgents gaze towards the quarter whence the ball has come, and see a bright uniform retiring from the tunnel.

Then ensues a scene which baffles description.

With a wild war-whoop, Slygreen darts into the tunnel, and the men pour after him. The lights were snatched from the niches, and dashed on the ground.

Profound darkness succeeded almost immediately the smoking flare of the torches. Now can be seen distinctly their enemies, who are thronging down the passage, directed from the rear by L'Ombre, whose cowardly face bespeaks his fear.

The detachment of soldiers have arrived, and, hearing the reverberating roar of the insurgents' voices, have searched the chamber of the two prisoners, and found them gone.

To be led into the secret passage by the valet, and guided to the cavern by the voices, is but the work of a few minutes.

"Follow me, comrades!" shouted Hereward, pressing foremost, though blood is dropping from his arm, and his face is clay-white. "We'll chase them like rats from the passage!"

"No, you won't, master!" muttered Watt, nudging his elbow earnestly. "Keep back, for Heaven's sake; you're wounded already, and, by St. Christopher, if they see you, you're gone! Go? there's a hole round there: into another passage—make good your case—"

"You arrant knave, would you give me such a coward's part to play as that?"

"But these men, good master—what arms have they against the soldiers?"

"True! Go! be their leader; I'll follow."

"Silence! Comrades, follow Slygreen, joining hands, that you may not lose each other."

This order was whispered from man to man, and Watt, daring not to disobey, led the company across the pitchy darkness of the cavern, silently as shadows.

In a few minutes Hereward found himself holding the pass against a strong body of armed men, who, with lights blazing, tried to effect an entrance.

Hereward was armed with a pair of pistols, and the dagger which Miss Chastelard had given him.

His left shoulder was pierced by a bullet, and his arm was rapidly becoming powerless; but he never thought of danger.

Retreating to the inner extremity of the tunnel, he made a barricade of a jutting rock, and, aided by the flambeaux of his antagonists, fired upon every advance; then retiring behind his barricade suffered the storm of answering bullets to fall harmlessly round him.

In this way he gained five minutes for the insurgents, and when they could no longer be heard he sent one last shot into the midst of the soldiers and rushed noiselessly across the cave.

Impenetrable darkness surrounded him; how should he find the passage by which his friends had escaped?

A shower of lead pattered about him, and warned him to keep out of range of the tunnel; he ran to one side, and, striking violently against the side of the cavern, fell, half stunned, upon the ground.

He now gave himself up for lost; the soldiers would discover immediately that the tunnel was forsaken—would pour into the cavern with their lights and find him; in fact, the firing had already ceased and a consultation was being held.

At this moment he remarked that the lurid light which streamed from the torches of the soldiers was rivalled by a pale bluish vapour, which began to rise at the extreme end of the cavern. It gleamed in ever-changing circles, faded and gleamed again like a phantom writhing.

What could it be?

An exclamation of joy escaped the youth; he rose and rushed toward it; it was the second entrance, upon which a quantity of phosphorus had been rubbed, probably by his faithful Watt, who rarely was without an expedient. Hereward stumbled down a rough descent, and found himself upon the firm floor of a second cave, just as the soldiers, headed by their captain, rushed into the cavern, flambeaux aloft, and began an infuriated search for the insurgents.

As the phosphorus was invisible in the glare of the torches, it was a considerable time before they found the second entrance, and by that time not a trace of the insurgents was to be seen.

Hereward, guided by a line of the phantom lights, sped along the secret passage until a pure waft of the outer air announced to him that the end was near.

Then a shaft of serene moonlight fell upon the marl of the floor, and anon he stood with the star-studded vault above him, almost fainting with exhaustion and loss of blood.

But the sight which met his gaze struck new fire into his veins and caused him to forget his weakness.

Below, on the sandy beach, a fierce battle was raging between the insurgents and a strong force of the soldiery.

The insurgents had been caught in a trap, and only escaped the secret passage to be butchered at its mouth by the soldiers, who outnumbered them two to one.

With a loud shout to his friends the youth swung himself down from the ledge upon which he had been standing, and, grasping his dagger firmly, rushed among them.

The sight of their young leader raised a yell of joy, and Watt, dealing death with every swing of his long arms, which wielded an immense pole, instantly placed himself close to his master that he might insure him double protection.

"Off with your hats when a Kentigorne appears! Off with them! Off with them!" screamed the dwarf.

And, at every repetition, his heavy pole smote a soldier to the earth.

Hereward immediately found himself attacked by the captain of the party, whose long rapier repeatedly sought his heart while his white teeth gnashed with fury at every fresh repulse.

Though dizzy and disabled the young hero fought like a lion, and twice struck down his assailant with the butt of his pistol.

But the band of insurgents slowly gave way before the superior force, and too soon Watt and his master, glancing round to encourage the others, found themselves alone.

The insurgents were scattered in every direction, some clambering up the rocks with the fleetness of desperation, some running along the shore, while the pursuers charged after them, firing as they ran.

"Surrender, young fibber!" cried Hereward's enemy, grappling once more with him.

A score of men at the same moment rushed upon Watt. A heavy blow upon the head from behind stunned Hereward into inaction. He dimly saw, as in a dream, Watt leaping high in air from among his captors by the aid of his pole, and, with a shriek of mocking laughter, disappearing from sight.

Sense failed him, a demoniac face glared into his, and he knew no more.

When he recovered consciousness he was being carried across a horse through the iron gates of Kentigorne Towers, his hands pinioned to his sides, and that same diabolic face which belonged to the captain of the force smiling scornfully into his.

The tide of fortune had set in determinedly against him; it was in vain to resist or complain; he must submit.

With a proud and calm demeanour he listened to the exulting taunts of the soldiers, and met the evil glances of the captain, who was handsome as Antinous and deadly as Nero.

Hereward determined to sustain his reverses with all the dignity of a Kentigorne.

(To be continued.)

MYSTERY OF THE HAUNTED GRANGE.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FACE to face, in the dead of the night, in the desolate room of Lyndith Grange, Fate had done her work, and brought those two together at last!

For one instant both stood speechless, spellbound—each with the same wild thought that she beheld a supernatural visitant.

Then, as the light of the lantern shone more broadly over the face and figure of the lady, the girl recognized her, and all superstitious fears were swept away in an impulse of uncontrollable surprise.

"Lady Charteris!" dropped from her lips. The words, the sound of a human voice, broke the spell.

Lady Charteris knew the slim figure standing before her was not the ghost of the mad lady.

"Who speaks?" she asked, faintly. She was intensely agitated, and her heart throbbed almost painfully. "Who are you?"

"I am Polly Mason," was the reply.

Polly's voice faltered a little as she said it. She always did feel ashamed of that intensely plebeian and unromantic cognomen, poor child.

Polly Mason! The name of all others now most dear to the heart of the lady.

She drew near hurriedly—half incredulous—she lifted her light high. Yes, it shone on the slender, girlish figure, the fair, drooping head, the beseeching eyes, the half-smiling, half-trembling lips, for Polly, thus detected, hardly knew whether to laugh or cry.

"My child! my child!" the lady cried, agitated, "what in the world brought you here—you, of all people alive, and at this unearthly hour?"

Polly laughed a little hysterically—then half sobbed:

"Oh, Lady Charteris, it was foolish, I know, and Duke and Rosanna will be so angry when they find it out. I'm half sorry now I came, but I could not help it. Eliza Long—you don't know her, of course, but we hate each other—dared me to come here and spend a night alone among the ghosts, and I—"

Polly cried piteously, and looking up, with her big blue eyes at the great lady, continued, "They left me here, and are to call for me at two o'clock. It must be near that now. Please, my lady,"—and she spoke very humbly—"don't tell; I was not afraid, indeed I wasn't, and I slept nearly all the time; but Duke would be vexed—Duke's my cousin, please, my lady—and he's such a dear old cousin, I should not like to make him sorry. Oh, Lady Charteris!" Polly clasped her hands, "I know this is your house, but I was not aware that you or anybody ever came here, or I'd never have come. Oh, please don't say I've done anything so very, very wrong."

Polly could talk at all times, and awe of ladies, great or small, she did not know. She wondered to find Lady Charteris here at such a time, and she hoped Duke wouldn't discover her escapade, but she was as prepared to converse with a baronet's lady as with Rosanna.

It was a moment before my lady answered, a moment during which she stood looking at the girl, with her hand pressed tightly over her heart. The blue, beseeching eyes were so like, so cruelly like those that seventeen years ago had been dearer to her than earth and all its glory.

It gave her a pang almost as sharp as death to see their counterpart thus. She scarcely heard a word, she only knew that the child of her love stood before her.

"My darling! My darling!" she said, with a smothered sob, "oh, my darling!" and the astonished Polly found herself caught in the lady's arms, and tears and kisses raining on her face.

Miss Mason's first impulse was that Lady Charteris had gone suddenly mad. It was not an improbable fancy, under the circumstances, and, much more alarmed than she had been any time yet, she

strove to get away. She was prepared to meet a ghost, if you like, but not a lunatic.

Lady Charteris understood her in an instant, and at once released her.

"I have frightened you, my dear," she said, recovering herself—self-command was a fixed habit with her now, she was not at all likely to give away again, "but you—you resemble some one I once knew. My child, what a strange thing for you to do—to come and spend a night in this dismal place. Were you not terribly afraid?"

"Well—no, my lady, at least not until I heard you upstairs. I don't mind a bit so that Duke and Rosanna don't find out."

"You are very fond of your cousins, my dear?"

"Oh, very!" said Polly, "Duke especially; but every one loves Duke—the starved dogs in the streets, the little beggars who ask alms in the town—everybody!"

Her eyes lighted—yes, very fondly Polly loved "dear old Duke."

"You are happy—truly and really happy?" the lady asked—so earnestly she asked it.

"Happy?" Polly repeated; "well, no, not quite; I don't think anybody could be happy whose name was Polly Mason! Polly! it reminds one of a poll-parrot."

Lady Charteris smiled in spite of herself.

"Is that all? Well, my child, you can console yourself with the thought that, like most young ladies, you will one day change your name."

Polly blushed, and thought of Mr. Fane.

"I ought to be a happy girl, I suppose, for everybody is very good to me. My lady, will you please tell me the time?"

"It is just half-past one," Lady Charteris replied, looking at her watch; "my errand here is done, and you will return with me. And, Polly," she added, laying her hand on the girl's shoulder, "you know some of the people at the Priory. I saw you dancing, you remember, yesterday; don't mention to any of those young men, should you chance to see them, that you ever met me here. Now come."

"My lady, I cannot go—I promised to wait, and I must. They will call for me at two—only half an hour now. I wouldn't have them find me gone for the world when they return. I should never hear the last of it."

"Who are they, my little one?"

"Oh, Alice Warren and Eliza Long, and two young men; you wouldn't know any of them. They'll be here at two, and I must wait. I promised."

"A promise must be kept, of course. Will you not get a scolding to-morrow from this Duke you love so well, for this madcap prank?"

"A scolding! Duke scold!"

Polly laughed aloud at the stupendous joke—such a sweet, merry laugh.

"Oh, dear, no, my lady—Duke couldn't scold if he tried, least of all me. But he would look grieved, and that would be ten times worse, and never say a word, and be kinder to me than ever. Rosanna would scold and I shouldn't mind it a bit; but Duke—" Polly shook her curly head with contrition. "No, I hope Duke won't hear of it."

"Then he shall not—from me. And I must go and leave you here. It seems almost cruel."

"You are very kind, my lady, but don't mind me; I'm not afraid, and I couldn't go—that's the amount of it. Please let me help you out."

Lady Charteris stooped and kissed her very gently this time.

"You are a brave little girl. Good night, and don't come here any more."

The benediction given with the kiss was uttered in the lady's heart. Polly helped her out of the window, and watched her as she flitted down the avenue, her light steps lost on the grassy ground.

"Now I wonder what brought her here?" thought Miss Mason, "all alone, and at this time of night—morning, I mean—for it's close upon two o'clock! Is she going to walk all the way to Montaleni Priory? and does her husband know she's out? Oh, dear!"

Polly yawned drowsily.

"I do wish they would come!" she repeated to herself every now and then.

She had not long to wait. Before two struck the quartette stood under her window, filled with remorse and dire misgivings.

Would they find her alive when they returned? Would they find her at all? Might not the cavalier's ghost carry her off bodily to the land of restless shadows whence he came?

But Polly, as bright as a new shilling, stood smiling before them, and leaped with the bound of a deer out of the window and into the arms of the haberdasher's young man.

"That will do, Sam; I don't want help," said Miss Mason, rather disdainfully. After Allan Fane and Guy Earls court, it wasn't likely she was ever again going to tolerate tradesmen's apprentices. "Yes, I'm safe, Eliza, in spite of you, and the ghosts, and the rats; and I've had a sociable chat with one of the ghosts that haunt the Grange, and

a very pleasant ghost it is. I hope you're convinced I'm not afraid now, and if you, or any of you, let Duke or Rosanna find out this night's work, I'll—well, don't you do it, that's all. I may be an idiot for my pains, but I'm not going to worry them into their graves."

Even Eliza Long promised. She had been considerably alarmed during the hours of waiting. If they found Polly dead, or gone mad through fright, Peter Jenkins would turn Queen's evidence, she knew, and there was no telling what the law might not do to her—hang her perhaps.

She promised, and she kept her word—for two or three months—and by that time it did no harm to tell.

At half-past two exactly Polly stole in through a kitchen window and upstairs in her stockings to bed, and fell asleep, and awoke up and came fresh and smiling down to breakfast, none the worse for her night's dreary frolic.

"He will be here presently," was the young lady's thought; and, breakfast over, she went back to her room to get herself up for the occasion.

She looked over her wardrobe with a melancholy sense of its deficiencies. A white muslin and a drab silk for Sundays. Polly hated that drab silk, which Rosanna had bought as a good serviceable colour. Two faded gingham, much the worse for washing and mending, and last winter's blue merino. That was all.

She chose the blue merino, faded a little, but low necked and short sleeved, and the colour that suited her best, and put it on, together with a blue ribbon the hue of her eyes to tie up the short, crisp curls—and that was the whole of her adornment.

But the sloping shoulders and the rounded arms shone, and the sapphire eyes sparkled, and the short, boyish curls were like supple gold; and, standing before the glass, the girl knew she was beautiful.

Mr. Fane came, and not alone. At eleven o'clock he drove up in a dashing little phaeton, with cream-coloured, high-stepping ponies, and Miss Maud Charteris by his side.

Polly was seated under an arch of morning-glories, reading Tennyson, posing for the occasion, and Mr. Fane's sparkling eyes told her pretty plainly what he thought of her looks.

He had come to take her to the Priory for that first sitting for the Fair Rosamond, and this was Miss Maud Charteris, Miss Mason, and he was quite sure each young lady would be charmed with the other.

Miss Maud Charteris gave Miss Polly Mason a little half-patronizing, half-haughty smile and bow, which the latter returned with equal hauteur. This little Miss Charteris was not pretty. She was pale and sickly of aspect, with her father's black eyes, and tar-black hair, straight as an Indian's. The bright silks which that doting father liked to see her wear contrasted harshly with her small, pinched features and sickly pallor. She was dressed like a doll now, in tawny silk of brilliant hues, a white lace scarf, a Paris hat, wreathed with pink rose-buds, and dainty boots, and gloves, and pink silk and point-lace parasol.

Polly saw it all, and the faded blue merino, and her bare, brown hands, and her straw hat, with its cheap ribbons, looked—oh! so unutterably shabby, and poor, and mean. How could Mr. Fane ever look at her twice beside the glittering little butterfly—this baronet's daughter, dressed in rose silk? She could not repress a feeling of hopeless longing, and—yes, the truth must be told—envy; and was driven to Montaleni Priory so silent and depressed that she hardly knew herself. How could she tell that Mr. Fane never saw the tartan silk, the Paris rosebuds, or the point lace? He only knew that the baronet's daughter was sallow, and puny, and not pretty, and that a girl as bright, as blooming, as beautiful as Hobe's self sat beside him, with two blue eyes whose like he had never seen before.

Miss Charteris declined to talk a little to Miss—aw—Mason, as the steppers bore them along. Had she really lived all her life in this dull country town? Had she never been to school, nor to Paris—never even to London? It must be dreadfully dull—such a life. She regarded the shabby merino and the common straw hat with pitying wonder. She was unutterably condescending to this dowdy country girl whom Mr. Fane wanted to paint.

The little embryo lady took the airs of a *grande dame* as naturally as a duckling takes to water; and, with every question of the disdainful patrician, Polly grew more and more angry and sulky and sorry she came; and it was in a very bad humour indeed that she entered the dusky splendour of the Priory, and followed Mr. Fane into an apartment where flowers bloomed, and birds sang, and beautiful pictures were on the walls, and tall vases—taller than herself—stood, and a Turkey carpet covered the floor, and silken draperies hung, and Parian statuettes glimmered in the pale green light. Her heart sank more and more at sight of all this splendour.

No wonder Maud Charteris despised her—Maud Charteris, who lived in perpetual tartan silks, to whom this gorgeous temple was only an every-day drawing-room.

Mr. Fane left her for a moment to go in search of Miss Hanton, he said, who was to sit for Queen Eleanor.

Miss Charteris left her, excusing herself elaborately, to remove her hat and scarf.

Polly was alone. Silence reigned. It was like a church. She glanced about her in awe.

But presently, through a curtained arch at the farther end of the room, voices came. One was the voice of little Miss Maud, the other the languid, haughty accents of Miss Hanton.

"Pretty?" she was repeating, in rather a contemptuous tone. "Did Mr. Fane really say so, Maud? He must have been jesting, surely. Why, the girl in white, with whom I saw him dancing, was a perfect little dowdy."

"Well, I thought so too, Diana," said the piping treble of the little lady of thirteen; "and to-day—you should see her! Such a dress—old and faded, oh—"

Words failed to describe the unfashionable make of this old, faded dress.

"How tiresome of Mr. Fane to fetch her here; and one must be civil to the little creature, I suppose. Pretty! a stupid country girl, with red hair and freckles!"

Polly waited to hear no more; her heart felt full to bursting—she hardly knew whether with anger or wounded feeling or what. She had been insulted—outragedly insulted. Why had Mr. Fane ever brought her here?

She got up and made her way out—how she hardly knew—through long suites of rooms, and down that grand gilded and carved staircase.

She was out of the house and into the bright sunshine, with the summer wind blowing in her hot face, and a swelling in her throat that nearly choked her.

"A stupid country girl, with red hair and freckles!"

That dreadful sentence rang in her ears like a death-knell all the way home.

She went straight up to her room, and threw off the blue dress and the blue ribbon, and put on the most washed-out of the gingham, and looked at herself in the glass.

It was quite true all they said of her. She was a dowdy, and looked it. She had red hair, too—it appeared yellow to her. But red or yellow it was all the same—and she had freckles.

The light was very strong, and, by straining her eyes, she counted seven under one eye, and five under the other. She was neither clever, nor handsome, nor good—she was only a sunburnt tomboy, and would never go near the Priory, or those scornful ladies any more, and Mr. Fane should get his *congé* (Polly knew French) if he ever dared come near her again.

She was silent too, and declined taking her tea when tea-time came, and went out into the garden to let the evening wind cool off, if it could, her flushed face. And, as she reached the gate, there stood Mr. Allan Fane in person.

"Miss Mason—Polly!" he began, "what on earth made you run away? Did I leave you too long? I give you my word I could not help it, and I hope you're not offended. What was it?"

Polly looked at him with flashing eyes. She would have cut off her right hand sooner than let him know how she had been humiliated.

"What is it, Polly?—I think you said that I might call you Polly," he continued, with a tender look.

"You may call me anything you please, Mr. Fane—a dowdy, stupid country girl, such as I am. If I were Miss Diana Hanton, or Miss Maud Charteris, it would be quite another thing—but how could a shabby, ignorant, red-haired rustic expect either respect or courtesy?"

"Polly—Miss Mason! Good Heaven! Has anyone insulted you! Who came into the rooms while I was away?"

"Not a soul, Mr. Fane. But you should not be surprised at anything a person in my class of life may do. We don't know any better, and I got frightened, very naturally, at all the splendour about me, and ran away—just that. One word, one look, from so grand a lady as the Honourable Miss Hanton would have annihilated me; I ran away. Don't waste your time, I beg, Mr. Fane. Go back to the Priory, and the high-born ladies there."

"You are as thorough a lady as the best of them, Miss Mason, if you will pardon my presumption in saying so, and I wouldn't exchange five minutes with you for a day with the fairest of them."

He told the truth—there was a glow on his placid face very unusual there. Polly, pretty at all times, was tenfold prettier when thoroughly angry. The haughty poise of the head, the flashing fire in the blue eyes, the flush on the oval cheeks, the ringing tones of the clear voice became her well.

"Some one has offended—some one has insulted

you, it may be, Miss Mason, but it was not I. If I only dared put in words what I think of you—but no, even the deepest admiration may sometimes appear impertinence. Tell me you are not angry with me, I could not bear that, Polly."

His voice softened to a wonderful tenderness—the eyes that looked at her were full of a light that shot the words home.

Mr. Fane having spent the past four years at the business was past master of the art of love à la mode.

Polly's heart stirred for an instant, and the fiery scorn died out of her face, and into its place came a beautiful, tremulous light. But she laughed saucily, even while moved.

"You are talking treason to your sovereign, Mr. Fane. What would Miss Hantton say if she heard you?"

"Miss Hantton may go to Paradise, if she likes. What is Miss Hantton to me?"

The future Mrs. Fane, or rumour tells stories!" "Rumour does tell awful stories, always did. If I cared for Miss Hantton would I be here? Polly, you must sit for that picture, only, by Jove, I shall have to paint you for Queen Eleanor if you look as you do just now. Won't you ask me in, and give me some tea, please? I came after you in such haste that I never waited for luncheon."

"What?" Polly cried, "has it taken you since one o'clock to walk three miles? Oh, Mr. Fane, don't think me a greater goose than you can help. Come in if you like, and I will see if Rosanna will let you have the tea."

"That doesn't sound too hospitable," the artist said, "but where one is very anxious to obtain the *entrées* one must not stand on the order of his invitation. We shall have the sittings here, Miss Polly, instead of at the Priory."

Mr. Allan Fane never once noticed the faded gingham; he went into the house, meeting rather a cool reception from both Duke and Rosanna.

Polly was all mortal man could desire, and he lingered until the moon was up, and the loud-voiced kitchen clock struck nine.

The girl went with him to the gate, the moon shone crystal clear. What a night it was—what a beautiful, blissful world altogether. And Rosanna called life a weary pilgrimage, and earth a vale of tears!

"May I come again, and very soon, Polly?" asked Mr. Fane, holding her hand, and looking into the eyes he thought brighter than all those shining stars above.

"Certainly," Miss Mason responded, demurely; "and, if you make such progress at every sitting as you have done at this, Mr. Fane, the Fair Rosamond will be completed before you know it."

Her clear laugh rang out, the truth being that the artist had entirely forgotten Fair Rosamond, Allan Fane being so engrossed by Polly Mason.

He lit his cigar and walked homethrough the soft summer night with the uneasy conviction dawning upon him that he was falling helplessly in love. There had been moments this very evening when it had been all he could do to restrain himself from snatching her to his breast, resigning all the hopes and ambitions of his life, and become possessor of those wondrous eyes of purple light—that darkling, sparkling, beauteous face—that saucy, witching smile.

"Jove!" he exclaimed, "what a face that girl has—what a pair of eyes!"

He thought of Diana Hantton, and her three thousand a year, her lofty birth, her blue blood. She had blue eyes too, but, aristocratic in all things, Miss Hantton was most aristocratically near-sighted, and the eyes were woefully dim and faded by comparison with those he had left.

"Why wasn't I born with two thousand a year?" the artist thought, moodily. "I'd marry that girl out of hand, and go to Italy, and spend the remainder of my days lying at her feet, looking up at her perfect beauty. Or, why hasn't she a fortune? My pretty Polly, I fear you and I must part."

Mr. Fane did not present himself at the cottage next morning as Polly had hoped, and, after dinner, putting on her hat, she strolled up to see her friend, Alice Warren.

If Mr. Fane were coming she would meet him, or, if he went to the house and found she was not there, it would do him no harm to wait.

She did not meet him, however, and, reaching the bailiff's abode, she found Alice alone, and in some perplexity.

(To be continued.)

THE NEW STIMULANT.—Chloral drinking, according to the physicians, is superseding absinthe, opium and alcoholic stimulants among the better classes. An insidious sedative, its use grows more dangerously on the tippler than more actively intoxicating drinks. The manufacture of this drug is the best evidence of the extent of its use. In Europe its production has become one of the lead-

ing chemical industries, and it is sold by the tun. Baron Liebig affirms that one German chemist manufactures and sells half a tun a week.

BEAUTIFUL ALLEGORY.

CRITTENDEN, of Kentucky, was at one time engaged in defending a man who had been indicted for a capital offence. After an elaborate and powerful defence, he closed his effort with the following striking and beautiful allegory:

"When God in his eternal council conceived the thought of man's creation he called to him the three ministers who wait constantly upon the throne—Justice, Truth, and Mercy—and thus addressed them: 'Shall we make man?' Then said Justice: 'Oh, God, make him not, for he will trample upon the laws.' Truth made answer also: 'Oh, God, make him not, for he will pollute thy sanctuaries.' But Mercy, dropping upon her knees, looking up through her tears, exclaimed: 'Oh, God, make him—I will watch over him with my care through all the dark paths which he may have to tread!' Then God made man, and said to him: 'Oh, man, thou art the child of Mercy; go and deal with thy brother.'"

The jury, when he had finished, were drowned in tears; and, against evidence, and what must have been their own convictions, brought in a verdict of not guilty.

THE GIPSY'S ORDEAL.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE boy found it to be a very considerable work to get all ready and in proper trim to leave the island.

First, he turned the boat over upon her keel, and repaired the broken gunwale. With the few tools he had, and these in but an indifferent condition for use, the operation was necessarily slow.

He procured from the cabin of the old wreck sufficient caken planks to replace the broken thwarts; then worked out with saw and sheath-knife a new rail, which he fitted and secured to answer his purpose, though it was not very tasteful.

Then he cut a stick for a mast, and another for brail and broom, which he trimmed and lay in the sun to dry and season.

The sail he had was much larger than he needed. It had been thrown into the bows of the boat, when the "Lancet" was abandoned, in a hurry; but after two weeks' labour he got out of the canvas two good sails—a jib and mainsail of fair dimensions, though not large.

He then contrived, with some iron rings which he wrenched from parts of the old hull of the "Malero," to rig and secure a short stout bowsprit, which he fastened with a strong piece of rope-stay on each side, from its point to the forward quarters.

Then he fixed two plank shears across the front thwarts, worked a hole above and below for his mast, and finally fitted both firmly, which he secured again with a single strand of shroud from the peak to the gunwale.

It was not a very comely arrangement, but it was strong and substantial; and it was the best he could do with the materials and tools at his command.

Over the bows of the boat he stretched a piece of the canvas that was left, to keep the spray and wash from wetting his provisions, and underneath this shelter he finally stored the food he took for himself and Victor for the voyage.

The tiller was uninjured.

He worked out with his axe two good oars from other sticks, which he cut and dried first in the sun, in case of accident or loss of his mast.

The two boxes in which the bread had been found served him to pack his provisions in.

On board the old hull he had discovered, during one of his later visits to the wreck, some junk bottles containing brandy, stowed away in the captain's lockers. These he emptied and washed. His keg of spirits he emptied also, filling a portion of the bottles with the liquor, and appropriating the keg to a better use—namely, the filling it with fresh water at the last moment.

Other bottles he filled with fresh water too, and a few with goat's milk, just before he set sail.

He then gathered all the remaining dried plums he had, and a few pounds of poor raisins. Lastly, he secured and dried or cooked a good supply of fish, which he salted.

The boy turned over in his mind considering all the contingencies of his present undertaking as he toiled and made ready for his departure; and, as time wore by, and the day approached when he would leave the island, his spirits grew more buoyant, and he was more and more hopeful of success.

His compass was in working order. He rigged a binnacle-box or frame for this, just aft of the main

stern-thwart, where he could see it and steer readily.

His quadrant and telescope he stowed away with his bottles of spirits, two heavy swords, an axe, hammer, saw, and all his spare rope, under the stern-sheets.

The small iron kettle he broke the handle from, and took for a boat-bailer, in case of need; this he filled with fresh water too, at the start, to use first on the voyage.

He had attached strong rope-rings to his mainsail, with which to slide it up and down the mast, but he had no reef points upon either sail, inasmuch as he had no conveniences for attaching them; and concluded that when he encountered rough weather—which he prayed might be spared him—he would do the best he could with his oars, and without sails.

Carlos made the closest calculations within his power.

The geography of the country he was not well acquainted with.

He knew in a general way that land—the continent—lay away somewhere to the north; how far, whether two hundred, or one hundred, or five hundred miles, he had no idea.

He did not know if there might not be other islands, larger than that he was on, and perhaps inhabited, lying between him and the main land.

He determined upon laying his course due north at any rate, and to sail as nearly upon that line as wind and currents would permit.

He thought he might make an average of sixty to seventy-five miles a day, excepting delays, headwinds, squalls, etc.

Supposing the land to be distant from him at farthest two hundred leagues—which he considered a large allowance—he ought to reach it or sight it with anything like a fair voyage in two weeks; perhaps in ten days. If it were at a less distance, then in less time.

To guard against all probable contingencies, he thought if he put on board the boat twenty-five days' provisions and water, sufficient to keep himself and Victor comfortable, as to food and drink this would be ample.

Within a month he would get somewhere, or be picked up at sea, or go to the bottom, or starve out—any result would be better than farther suspense.

Besides, this supply was all he could carry with any degree of comfort or convenience.

So he stowed away fish, plums, raisins, boiled eggs, water, and spirits for a month—for himself and Victor—and, at length, after over two months of steady toil in preparation, he was in readiness to begin to get the cargo aboard of his frail craft, which had been launched a week.

The sails were rigged and stowed, and she lay close to the shore.

Carlos looked about upon his family of live stock—his goats and his fowls that had kept him company for months—and he really dreaded parting from them, for they had come to be very pleasant companions in his exile, but he could not take them with him.

For a fortnight he had gathered his surplus eggs carefully; and these he boiled hard, and put several dozens on board for food.

He packed his dried fish and fruit, then placed them on board with his tools and compass and instruments, then spare ropes and oars, and in the keg and bottles put the water and spirits and goat's milk.

Then he loosed his fowls and goats, and bade them go free and look out for themselves; but they lingered round him to the last moment.

The belt which contained the money and jewels he fastened round his chest, beneath his well-worn clothing, after sewing to its upper edges two broad shoulder-bands, from which its weight depended—for it was heavy—and he calculated if any accident should occur to him, whereby he might be again thrown into the sea, and be compelled to swim for his life, he would thus carry his fortune with him wherever his body might eventually come up.

The papers from the logbook, and those in the Donna Una's handwriting, he was desirous to preserve in this way for the future.

The two diamond rings which he had taken from the skeleton's fingers, one of which had the word *Montrai* on the inside, he placed upon his own brown hands; and, at length, one bright, clear, breezy morning, he and Victor took their last meal upon the island, and prepared to bid the spot that had so long sheltered them a final adieu.

He had thought of everything—not even forgetting the chances of encountering pirates on his way; but these he cared little about.

His personal appearance and that of his ill-fated boat would not be likely to tempt the cupidity of those wretches he fancied, who, should they come athwart him, would not be likely to suspect that he carried beneath his soiled and tattered garments, and

the dirty canvas jacket over all—which the boy had made with the remnants of the old sail—a fortune of thirty thousand Spanish dollars' value in gold and jewels! Not much. There was little danger on this score.

Yet, on farther reflection, Carlos didn't know about this. The thought disturbed him a little. He was armed, however—that is, he had two heavy swords and his dog aboard, and he could defend himself, with a fair chance, and room to manoeuvre in, if his foes were not too numerous.

But then again all this was "borrowing trouble." He probably would meet with no occasion where he would be required to defend himself in this way. He was but a beggarly-looking creature, in that queer-fashioned and ragged attire; his old canvas hat, his worn-out, almost soleless boots, his embrowned skin, and his appearance generally must prove a protection.

He could not be suspected of having in his possession any valuables, and, on the whole, he at last deemed himself perfectly safe from molestation by pirates at least.

The parting moment had come. Carlos had visited the old wreck for the last time the day previously, and before he left that end of the island he had prepared a hard wood head-board for the grave where he had buried the bones of the skeleton he had removed from the old vessel—the poor remains of her who had given him birth, but whom he had never known in life as mother. Upon this head-board he cut roughly with the point of his sheath-knife the following inscription:

"Beneath lie the remains of Una Perille Alphonse, lost on the wreck of the 'Malero,' upon these island rocks; found and interred by her son Carlos."

Having fastened this board firmly in the earth, over the grave, he heaped some heavy stones about it, and turned silently away towards the cave where he still lodged, and to which, next morning, he was to bid a final farewell.

When at length all was in readiness for departure the boy called his chickens and his goats about him, and threw among them the last food he had to give them.

The goats bleated, the fowls croaked; even Victor seemed to understand that something unusual was about to transpire.

The sun was just rising resplendently at the eastern horizon. The sea, far as the eye or glass could reach, was just rippled by the warm Southern breeze, but the swell was perceptible, even close to the shore, where the boat rode in deep water. Her blunt prow, with its stubbed but useful bowsprit, rose and fell quite gracefully, for so matter-of-fact a little craft.

A thousand memories thronged upon the boy at that last moment upon the lonely island. His good fortune in reaching it; his better fortune in being able to subsist there so long without suffering from want; his continuous good health; the saving of Victor; the companionship of the birds and animals; the strange meeting with the remains of his mother; the learning of his own queer personal history; the acquirement of the splendid legacy which he could not otherwise have known anything of, and never, probably, would have received had it fallen into other hands than his; the fortunate discovery of the wreck, and washing ashore of the "Lancet's" boat, in which he was now enabled to leave his weary state of exile. For all this he was very thankful.

He offered up his acknowledgments to Heaven, and silently prayed that he might be watched over and protected in the perilous voyage he was about to embark upon, and that he might be restored at last to her he loved in his native land.

Bidding farewell to his flocks, he jumped into the boat, followed closely by Victor, who had been anxiously watching his movements for an hour, ran up the little jib, and, heisting the mainsail, moved slowly down the shore to the westerly end of the island, which he rounded, then turned northward upon his course, with the wind directly behind him.

Then he hauled all taut, and, rising in the stern-sheets, he turned his face back towards the spot of his late exile, raised his canvas hat and gratefully bade his lone island home adieu!

CHAPTER XVIII.

Two years—a long and varied period—had passed away since Carlos had left Inez on the shores of Spain upon his second voyage in the "Lancet."

In all those weary days and months the boy had never forgotten his first and only love, the dark-eyed, beautiful equestrienne who had so charmed him at first sight, and had given him back love for love, though both were then in their fresh, youthful years, and could have had no idea or been able to make any calculation upon the long future that was before them, for good or ill, yet they looked only upon the brighter side, and saw naught but joy and happiness in store for them.

Two long years! during which, alas! a world of sorrow, abuse, neglect, and destitution had been the lot of loving, trusting, beautiful Inez, as we shall see by-and-by, but of this the boy-lover never dreamed, and could not, of course, be cognizant of.

Ah! how the heart of Carlos would have ached had he known or suspected the fate of the gentle Inez during the months that succeeded the pleasant day when he finally quitted her at Barcelona, and embarked upon the voyage which proved so disastrous to the "Lancet" and her unfortunate crew.

But he didn't know this.

He had ever been hopeful of eventual safety and relief in the darkest of the many dark hours he experienced, and he supposed that his dearly loved Inez was prosperous and happy during all that time; and this thought consoled him continually. He could bear misfortune; his whole life had been a continuous series of hard knocks, and he had weathered them all, and was still ready and willing, if such must be his fate, to face as many more, indeed; for his courage was yet untamed, and his hopes as sanguine as ever.

But the girl he loved was not fitted to encounter rough usage, and he sincerely hoped she might never know anything of pains, and perils, and misadventure such as he had suffered in the past three years.

He had left in her charge the treasure which he had earned so gallantly, it will be recollected, prior to this second unlucky voyage; and fortunate it was for poor Inez that he had done this.

She had promised him before he sailed that she would take charge of it, and use it if she needed it—an arrangement which the boy insisted upon her agreeing to ere he placed the gold in her hands.

"I will use it if I need it, Carlos," she said; "but surely I never shall!"

She little knew what might occur, even to her, then in the height of her prosperity. But for this gold she must have suffered starvation, as it turned out. But we will not anticipate.

Carlos was on the bright, blue, sun-gilded Mediterranean; the heavens were aglow with the cheerful light; the breeze behind him was freshening, and he bounded away with sanguine hopes over the sparkling waves.

Victor sat bolt upright in the centre of the tiny craft, looking straight forward away out into the open distance, as if he realized that there was relief ahead, somewhere. He knew about as much as did the boy of the facts in the case, for neither had any distinct idea of what was before them.

The boy concluded to eat but two meals a day for the present.

Victor was an "able-bodied" fellow, and would devour all that was given him and look over his broad shoulders for more every time. So the boy was compelled to stint the dog upon a reasonable allowance of fish and as little water as could possibly be got along with.

By sunset, the first day, Carlos judged he must have accomplished fifty miles upon his voyage in a bee-line north. He was at a loss how to manage about sleeping; but he knew that he must get rest—however little at a time—or he would soon become exhausted.

He had started upon a young moon, then in the second quarter and falling.

The nights, when clear, would be quite light; and if he chanced to have good weather, the trip—if not too lengthy—would really be a pleasant exchange for the monotony he had experienced on the island.

There were no indications of a change of weather, and securing the tiller amidships he "napped it" comfortably all night.

The next day passed as nicely as the first twenty-four hours, Victor sitting up most of the time and keeping a steady look-out forward.

So to the third evening.

Then the wind veered to south-west and Carlos stood up on the changed breeze, but did not alter his course. It blew pretty fresh on the third night, and he got but little rest.

Victor, meantime, did little but eat and sleep. The looked-for landing did not appear. Night came—four days out. Good breeze, west-south-west.

Carlos still kept the boat close hauled and made good headway.

He thought he must have accomplished two hundred miles at least.

Night clear—moon bright—going into third quarter. Wind changed to south again and steady. He got some hours' sleep. Waked, refreshed, an hour before dawn. Weather a little hazy, and hot.

Fifth day out from the island, foggy, and but little wind.

Slow progress—very. Cleared up at sunset. Bright moon and gentle south-west breeze. Went on again—glibly. Got some rest. Dog impatient and tired of this fun, evidently. Carlos talked to him—told him precisely how they were situated, and what the prospect was—as well as he knew.

Morning—sixth day. Winds baffling and atmosphere thick. Hazy at noon and little wind from anywhere. Sails flapping listlessly. Fog thicker—calm—and hot.

Reminded Carlos of the day when he had the sea-sight, through surprise, possibly in this very region—two years before—when he elift. Signor Napoli's ear from his head, and hurled him, exhausted, into the sea, where he was drowned, of course—or ought to have been drowned—thought the boy.

Fog cleared. Fine night. Good breeze sprang up at near daybreak—after the boy had got five or six hours' rest again. Clear day at the beginning of second week out and fair wind. He must have gone four hundred miles, he thought.

Carlos was approaching the coast, but he didn't know it. He was then within thirty leagues of Cape Crio, to the westward of the shore island of Candia; but his course was unchanged—due north—and he passed up and away from this shore unwittingly.

Just afterwards he took a sharp blow for a few minutes from the eastward—the wind veering round suddenly and reminding him again of the gale on board the "Lancet," though it was by no means so severe, and lasted but a little while. He was ready for it, for he had been on the watch sharply, anticipating a change for an hour or two.

"Let go all!" shouted the boy, from former habit, and at the same time loosing jib and mainsail.

And down they came by the run, as he sprang to the tiller and put the boat away before it. He was blown considerably off his course to leeward. When night came it had passed. He hauled up the jib again, then the mainsail—laid her up to the wind—got his supper—fed Victor—and caught a good nap or two before daylight.

Morning came on the eighth day. Provisions and dried fruit in plenty, but fresh water getting low. Victor thirsty and uneasy. Wind fallen away—weather thick again and hot—dead calm, almost, at noon.

The boy had sighted but one sail since he left the island, and that occurred on the previous day; but she was far away to windward, and he did not make her out at all—lost sight of her soon afterwards, but felt that he must be nearing land, or had got into the track of sailing-vessels in that region.

And so he had, with a vengeance, as will shortly be seen.

Two hours past noon. Fog cleared. Boat standing on the wind, sou'-sou'-west. Breeze fair. Sighted a small vessel, such as he had seen before in the Archipelago when he was there—a tartan, a diminutive, sharp-sailing craft, sloop-rigged, carrying a broad jib and a very large lateen-yarded mainsail—a coaster, usually, but such vessels were often used by smugglers and pirates, or marauders, on account of their good sailing qualities.

This yacht, as she appeared in the distance, came bearing down towards Carlos, greatly to his joy, for it was the first sail he had seen near him for two years, and he even hauled and put himself in her way, for he desired to hail her, and find out where he was if possible.

But as she neared him he began to feel, from her movements, that she was not a friendly craft, anyhow.

She was evidently running down to find out who he was, and had really sighted Carlos's boat before he saw her.

On came the stranger, crossed the boat's bow, came up in the wind, tacked, and approached the boat very rapidly, outailing the boy beyond all comparison, for the boat was not a tenth part so large as the tartan, though both were one-masted and sloop-rigged.

Carlos at last saw the intention to lay aboard of him, though he could not comprehend the reason for such an outrage at all, and he lay off just in season to save being squarely struck and sunk by this so much heavier and larger craft.

"Luff! Sloop—ahoy!" shouted Carlos, in Spanish. "Take care, you blundering lubber! You'll run me down!"

These were the first words he had addressed to a human being in two years.

But it was too late. A collision could not be avoided, and, as the cruiser struck the small boat on the larboard quarter, just forward of the waist, the splinters from the crushed rail and side of the poor boy's boat flew in every direction, while the plank cleets that held the mast up gave way, and down came everything by the board—mast, mainsail, and jib. The boat was a wreck.

For a moment Carlos thought this dastardly act, by which he was ruined, was the result of carelessness. But he was soon undeceived as he heard a loud shout and roar on board the tartan, from the lungs of a stout, be-whiskered scoundrel on the low stern-deck, who, with two or three other persons on board the offender, composed the entire crew, as it turned out.

But Carlos instantly noticed that his disabled boat was already in tow, or grappled by the other vessel, for he went along by her side a moment, when he found she was filling with water, and he sprang aboard the tartan, seizing Victor stoutly by the neck at the same instant, and, with a "Hi, boy, over!" he landed on the sloop's deck with his dog, without even a "By your leave, senors," somewhat to the surprise of the occupants of the other vessel, evidently.

"Cut away!" shouted the leading spirit of this little rover, sharply.

Away went the boy's boat, astern, with all her stores and fixings—compass, quadrant, arms, implements, provisions, rum, and wrook—while Carlos demanded stoutly what this reception meant.

"Who are you?" asked the man whom the others called captain.

"I'm a wrecked sailor," said the boy, "doubly wrecked now. I have been two years on an island in the sea, four hundred miles south of this detestable place, where twice I have met with disaster. My boat is wrecked and gone. What am I to do? And how comes this treatment?"

"Answer questions here," said the captain, coolly. "Don't ask any. You may thus save your wind."

Carlos looked at this airy account, as he lounged there and thus incited him, after bawling in the side of his boat, and dashing all his hopes of reaching the shore. He sought so earnestly—and all without any apparent reason, except for mere pastime, or through sheer recklessness.

Suddenly, to his utter confusion and consternation, the lad observed that the man's sight ear was gone close to his head.

Could this be 'Napoli' again? Carlos asked himself. He could not make him out at all.

But his thoughts were quickly relieved as the captain said:

"Are you a sailor?"

"I am, senor," replied the lad.

"How long?"

"Several years."

"What can you do?"

"Anything on ship-board."

"Have you ever commanded a vessel?"

"Yes, often."

"Where?" asked the stranger.

"On these seas."

"Do you know the Mediterranean?"

"Yes, senor."

"The Archipelago?"

"Yes; well."

"We want men. Serve with us, then."

"Where and how?" asked the boy.

"Have you ever heard of Napoli?"

"Yes; the corsair."

"Well, perhaps so. I am he. Will you ship under my command?"

"That depends—" said the youth.

"On what?" demanded the pirate, roughly.

"On circumstances," said the boy. "What am I to do?"

"Obey orders."

"Give them too?" asked the lad, promptly.

"Well, yes. If you are competent."

"Whether are we bound now?" asked the boy.

"To the cavern, on the coast; our rendezvous."

"Are we so near the land?"

"Fifty miles from our landing. Thirty leagues from the Cape."

"What Cape, senor?"

"Cape St. Angelo. South of the Morea."

"That is the main land."

"Yes, I see you have been here before."

"Yes. How many men have you on board here?"

"Three only, besides myself."

"You do not often sail thus short-handed?"

"Only upon special missions. Will you serve?"

"I will. Put me in position somewhere, if I can fill it. Will you do this?" asked the boy.

"In good time; not now. You must first prove yourself capable and loyal. And you must take the oath."

"When?" queried Carlos.

"Whenever you take position. Now, will you serve?"

"I have already said so."

"Go below then."

"And my dog here?"

"Throw him overboard," replied the captain.

"No, captain. He's a good one. He must go where I go," said the lad. "I will see to him. He shall not annoy anybody. Come, Victor!" shouted the boy, proceeding forward, where he found a miserably confined bin of a forecabin, and ascertained that there were but three men aboard besides the captain; that they were on the way up from the main to the land rendezvous of the pirates, the captain having just come up in this little tender to his armed boats; that they were to take a crew of men and arms back immediately; and that this was "a good chance" for

him, in the sailor's opinion who gave this information.

Carlos thought it might be, perhaps; but he didn't say why he then thought so.

The boy got a civilised supper, the first he had eaten for over two years.

He gave Victor a good meal too, and at dusk went to talk with one of the two sailors, both of whom were Spaniards, while the little vessel was rapidly approaching the rough, rocky coast, upon which—away out seaward—was located the "Pirates' Rendezvous," which they usually visited only by night and left before daybreak, whenever the wind would permit.

The boy got the bearings of the main land by conversing with the sailor, learned where Cape Saint Angelo lay very nearly, and offered to take a turn at the helm that very night, which, however, the captain declined.

The two sailors turned in at last below in the cuddy.

The moon was nearly at the full.

Carlos, having stayed on deck for the very purpose, quietly drew the hatch up, and closed the fore-cabin.

The captain lay against the low rail of the quarter-deck, and the third sailor stood at the helm.

The vessel was moving along with a fair breeze, and the clouds were gathering about, occasionally obscuring the bright moon.

No craft had been in sight yet. The little cruiser had the sea to herself. They were several leagues from the shore yet. The tartan was a very good sailer, he observed.

The "captain" hailed the strange young man, after a few moments of silence, during which he had been watching the boy and dog attentively.

"Vast there, youngster!" he sang out.

"Ay, ay, senor," said Carlos, approaching him.

"Come aft, here!"

"Ay, ay, captain."

And Victor followed the boy.

"You say you have heard of Napoli before?"

"Yes, captain."

"What did you hear of him?"

"That he was a corsair—a cruiser—hereabouts."

"You never saw him, eh?"

"I saw him here."

"Ay. Well," continued the captain, "stand by now, and I'll spin you a yarn. You shall see how much better I know my men than some of them know me," continued he.

"Go on, captain," said the lad, standing near him, with Victor close by.

And Captain Napoli told Carlos the following story, which vastly interested him, as we shall shortly see, when Carlos told another, to Napoli's astonishment.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE pirate captain was well armed, and carried in the stout belt that encircled his waist a long knife, and a pair of heavy, double-barrelled pistols. He was a stout fellow, too, and knew how to use his weapons upon occasion.

He had recognized the boy!

The lad had his faithful great dog beside him, and his own sheath-knife in his breast.

This never left him, night or day. He knew the captain now, and had his own plan for that night, if fortune favoured him. But he was very quiet and respectful, and promptly "stood by," as he had been ordered to do, to listen to the pirate's story, as follows:

"You say you were in this region some two years ago," began Napoli.

"Yes, captain, twice."

"Exactly. Well, it must be something more than two years since that I was engaged professionally upon these waters, a few leagues westward, when we ran athwart a merchantman, to which with my crew I paid a visit—and warm work we had of it I remember.

"We ran upon her in a fog, and with thirty men I boarded her from my armed boats.

"They defended themselves bravely, and fought like fiends, slaughtering half a dozen of my crew, and wounding a dozen more, and in the end driving the rest into the sea.

"It was hot work I assure you; we laid about though right and left.

"She had a valuable little cargo, as I learned through my shore spies, and was bound from Smyrna to Barcelona I think.

"I wanted her freight, and meant to have the brigantine as well. But they knew it was life or death with them, as I said, and they fought like fiends, beating us and saving vessel and cargo. I led my men in person, for I never send my crew where I am unwilling to go myself.

"I cut her captain down and two or three of her men, and was pushing on to finish them up when

there rushed upon me a youngster whom I had seen before; a mere boy he was too, but he had had a good master, as I knew, and was a tough customer to meet with a broadsword, one of which I observed he then held in his stout grasp, and with it he was laying about him fearfully among my men when I tackled him. But he didn't know me at all evidently.

"We crossed weapons. He was very skilful and very strong. I could not hit him, and quickly found that he was bent on mischief. I fell back. He followed me sharply, but did not hit me once; though I had sharp work to parry and guard myself from his rapidly given blows.

"Suddenly his weapon came down with a tremendous slash, which I received upon my upraised blade, but unluckily it cut through my sword, crashing it off close to the hilt, and, glancing down past the side of my head, took off my right ear, and its edge was buried in my shoulder-blade, as my heel struck the low rail forward, and I fell over into the sea bleeding.

"But my reserve were close by in the boats and picked me up, as they did most of the other men who got off of that busy deck alive. He thought, undoubtedly, that I was killed or drowned. But I recovered after four months of suffering and prostration. And I vowed then, if I ever lived to meet that young fellow again, he should rue the hour he ever saw the face of Napoli. And he shall," concluded the pirate, with a round oath.

"You say you know this fellow, captain?" said Carlos, putting his hand quietly into his breast.

"Yes; but he didn't know me."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Oh, yes. He heard the captain yell, 'At him, lads; it is Napoli!' and that is all he knew of me."

"And you escaped?"

"Yes."

"That is a stirring tale, captain," said Carlos, "and interests me. You asked me when I came aboard where I hailed from. I told you I had been wrecked upon a desolate island, and had been there a prisoner over two years. Your interesting tale, just now related, reminds me of an incident in my own history. Shall I relate it? I think it will be quite equal to your yarn, captain."

"Go on—and briefly," said the pirate, sulkily.

"I must go back a few years earlier than the date when your adventure occurred," said Carlos, clutching his faithful sheath-knife by the handle as he spoke. "Back, captain, to Spain, where I was born. I was a mere youngster then, and had a tutor who pretended to be a priest or monk, I remember. But he was as great a villain as ever escaped the garrote. He even went so far as to officiate as priest at marrying a gipsy to a Spanish nobleman's daughter—one day—cheating the unlucky woman into the belief that he had 'taken orders,' and that the marriage was not a sham.

"He educated me, however, and did it well. He was a good swordsman, an athlete, a scholar; but a base villain, as I have said, at heart. I ran away from him when I was a dozen years old, and he didn't see me again for years. I met him once afterwards—but briefly—as I will explain in a moment.

"This fiend persecuted the lady he had pretended to marry to this gipsy I spoke of, and finally induced the poor lady dupe to go on a search after her child—whom he had stolen from her and secreted—away to Constantinople."

"Did she go?" asked the pirate.

"Yes. She loved the boy, and she started from Tortosa in the 'Malero.' The vessel was lost—all hands were drowned, I presume, except this one lone woman, who was a passenger."

"Was she saved?" exclaimed the captain, not a little excited at this history.

"In a moment I will come to it," said Carlos.

"Ah, well, go on."

"The cowardly captain and crew abandoned the vessel, and deserted this poor woman in a storm, and left her to perish on board. The brig was cast ashore on the rocks in the South Mediterranean, and went to pieces. I found the woman's bones in the cabin of the hull that lies there still upon the island where I too was washed ashore, and where I have dwelt, as I told you, two long, weary years. I was on my way to the main land when you ran me down to-day after I had buried that unfortunate woman's bones."

"Who was she?" asked the captain, earnestly.

"Una Perillo, the daughter of Don Sebastian."

"Who was this priest you spoke of?"

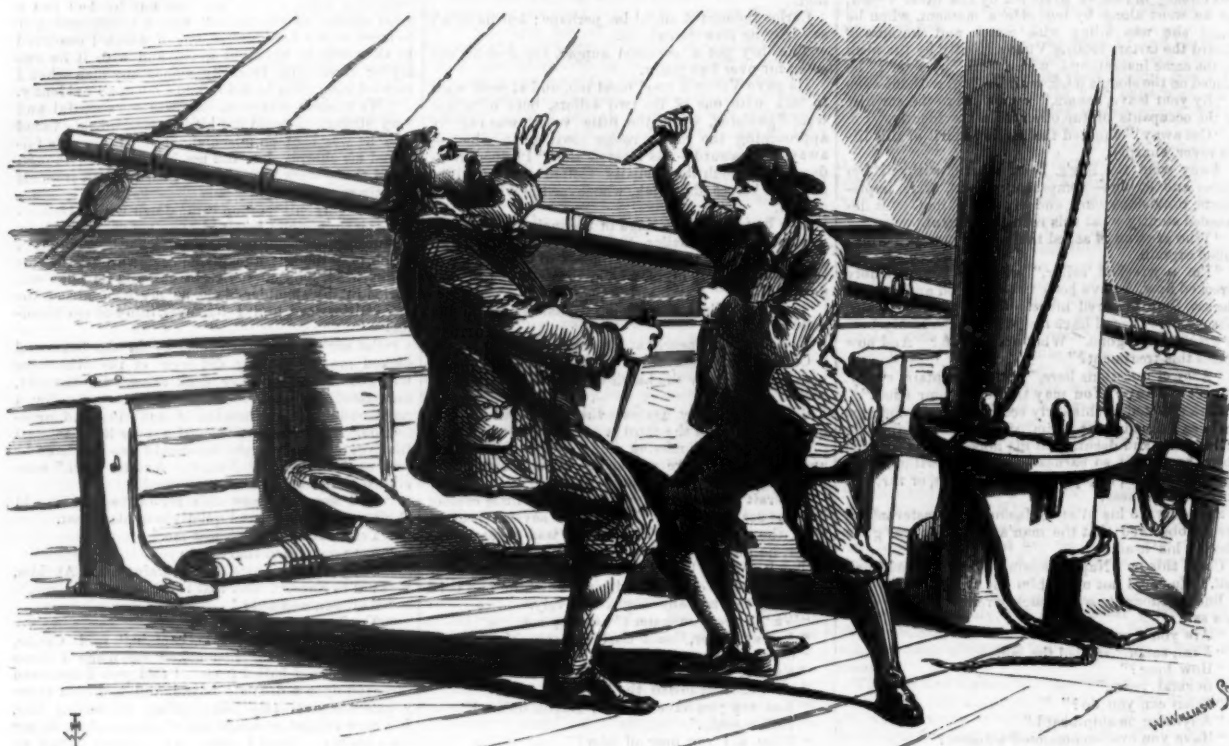
"He called himself 'Flueja,' but this name was falsely assumed," said the youth, firmly.

"Was his real name ever known?" queried the pirate, rising, and getting nearer Carlos, who watched his every motion, beneath the light of that bright moon, with the eye of a lynx.

"Was this Flueja afterward known?"

"Yes," said the boy, "before and afterward."

"By whom?" demanded the pirate.



[RETRIBUTION.]

"By the gipsy who told the woman of it."
 "By anybody else?"
 "Yes; by the boy I told you of."
 "What was his name?"
 "Carlos," replied the lad.
 "The real name of this priest—"
 "Was Napoli," said the youth, in a low tone.
 "Where is this boy now?" muttered the pirate, placing his hand upon his long knife-hilt.
 "Here!" answered Carlos; "sent by Fate to avenge his mother's wrongs upon her oppressor!" drawing his knife from his bosom quickly, just as the pirate sprang upon him and plunged his own dirk straight at the lad's heart!

Carlos brought down his blade at the same instant, however, and sheathed his keen weapon in the pirate's neck, who staggered back from the fearful blow, which had completely severed the jugular vein!
 Then, swiftly seizing the monster around the loins, the boy wrenched one of the pistols from his waist-belt and hurled the pirate Napoli backward into the sea without uttering another word.

Napoli's knife struck the gold-filled belt which Carlos had round his body, and this saved his life; it glanced aside, and merely pricked the ribs.

But the boy's blow was certain this time. The infamous false "priest," Fineja—the real pirate Napoli—had gone to his last account! He was never seen or heard of more; and the sharks in the Mediterranean probably made short work of him before daylight. A righteous retribution!

The two men in the cuddy were fast locked below. The man at the helm couldn't leave the rudder, though he started to do so, when Carlos said to Victor, sharply, "Watch him, boy!" and the sailor remained perfectly quiescent from that moment.

Instantly following up his contemplated plan, the boy turned, as he threw the pirate captain over the side, and, cocking the pistol at the helmsman's ear, he sang out:

"Quick! 'bout ship! I'm captain now!"
 And, seizing the helm, he sent the sailor, with Victor at his heels, to look to the jib and mainsail, as, with the helm, he threw her head round in the opposite direction to that they had been sailing, and made at once for Cape St. Angelo, the southerly point of the Mores.

The sailor was quick to obey, for he saw that he had a man to deal with now. Upon coming up on the other tack Carlos called him again to the helm.

"Where are we at this time?" asked Carlos.
 "Off Cape Spada, to the west'ard of Candia, senor."

"Where is Cape Cerigo, hence?"

"Due northward, senor," replied the sailor.
 "How far?" asked the boy.
 "Twenty leagues, not more, senor."
 "How is your course now laid?"
 "West-nor-west," said the helmsman.
 "Put her up two points!" rejoined the boy.
 "Ay, ay, senor."
 "And steady, do you mind?"
 "Steady," said the sailor, eyeing the pistol and the dog.

"Here, Victor," continued the boy, calling the great St. Bernard, who was all ready for anything, and understood perfectly what was expected of him in this emergency among strangers.

"Look at him, boy!" continued Carlos. "Down! Lie there and watch him!" said the boy, turning aside to see that all was snug, and drawing well, for a nice smart breeze was now blowing, and the little tartan, with her enormous sails well filled, was sweeping through the water at a good eight or nine knot speed.

Then young Carlos returned to the stern of the vessel, after seeing that the hatchway over the fore-castle was still secure, where the other two men had been lying sound asleep for three hours, entirely innocent of what was going on on deck, and where they remained close prisoners.

"How is she running?" asked the boy, sharply.
 "West-nor-west—two points north," said the man at the helm.

"Keep her so," said Carlos, pistol in hand.

"Ay, ay, senor."

"Steady, mind you."

"Steady," replied the sailor, promptly.

"If you swerve a hair's breadth from duty, I'll blow your brains out—mark me."

"I won't," responded the man, earnestly.

"Good; you shall not be harmed then."

"Rely on me, senor."

"No, I won't. I will rely on this weapon and my own good right arm," rejoined the boy. "Make for St. Angelo Light."

"Ay, ay, senor."

"You know it, do you?"

"I do, senor."

"When can we sight it?"

"At sunrise, senor."

"Good; I will reward your faithfulness, or punish your treachery—remember!" concluded the boy, severely.

This was enough.

The two other men remained prisoners in the cuddy. The third stood by the helm, with Victor at his feet, till eight bells, next morning, when the ves-

sel came to anchor near the shore, before the town; and Carlos ordered the man to lower away the little boat that hung by the davits over the stern; into which he sprang, with the dog, and rowed ashore, leaving the three men to look after themselves and the tartan pirate at their leisure.

Carlos did not return.

The next night the men took possession of the little sloop and spirited her away; and five days afterwards Carlos took passage with Victor in a vessel bound to Tortosa, and sailed once more from the Mores for Spain, after procuring comfortable apparel and disposing of his rags.

After a brief detention he ran down the Mediterranean, and made a fair passage to the Spanish coast.

He landed at Tortosa, and proceeded thence directly to Madrid, in the hope, but scarcely in the expectation, of finding the company to which fair Inez was attached, but they had been gone, then, over a year, nobody knew whither.

As for the former popular equestrienne, the Donna Inez—well, little could be learned of her, for nothing had been heard of her latterly, and most of those who could give any information regarding her supposed she was long since dead.

"There was a lady rider," said one, "who came to Madrid by this name two years previously, and took the city by storm with her daring and intrepid feats upon horseback in the arena."

"Ay, that was she," said the boy, glad at last that he had found some one who knew the lady he sought. "Yes, that was Inez. She was a splendid ring-rider, very popular, and very beautiful."

"Yes; so I remember," remarked the stranger.

"Well, whither did she go?" asked Carlos, eagerly.

"Ah!" said the other, shrugging his shoulders.

"Nobody knew whither at last."

"But she was successful?"

"Oh, immensely, for a time. But she met with an accident, you know."

"Accident? No, I did not hear of this."

"Yes; she got hurt one night—fell from her horse while riding at top speed, was disabled, left the company, or they left her. She became destitute, and disappeared entirely after a few months."

"Whither?" asked the boy, distressed at this sad intelligence, which greatly astonished him as well.

"I do not know," said his informant.

This was all the boy could learn of fair Inez in and around Madrid.

The once public favourite had been forgotten. And Carlos turned sorrowfully away.

(To be continued.)



[THE UNWELCOME VISITOR.]

THE SNAPT LINK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"Sybil's Inheritance," "Evelyn's Plot," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XLII.

But, darkly mingling with the thought
 Of each familiar vision, fraught
 With all that lay between.

"Is he awake, child?" said Mr. Clinton, in a low voice, as he stole noiselessly into the room where Gertrude had kept watch during the first hours of the night. "I thought I heard his voice speaking more rationally than usual."

The girl shook her head.
 "No—only in the old wanderings," she whispered; "but he seems calmer now, and sleep may save him yet."

"Perhaps. Better not—better not. It is hard to say when life is best—or death. But you had better go now; I will watch the rest of the night."

"No, no, I will not leave him to-night; it seems like a crisis, and he shall not meet it alone or with a stranger," she murmured, with sad firmness.

He gazed at her with a kind of bitter melancholy in his enforced admiration.

"The old tale," he muttered; "and ever for the most worthless. But you shall have your way on one condition—that you will confide the truth—which you have hitherto believed hidden from me—frankly and fully, when this poor, wild sufferer's fate is decided. Child, I have sheltered you both. I have surely a right to such confidence at your hands."

Gertrude would have promised her very life to gain that one precious boon, and her conscience smote her for the absorption of thought that had made her unmindful of the churlish but useful protector in her need.

"Yes, yes—anything, all you want, only leave us. His life may depend on a moment's stillness, and to wake him might be fatal. Go, in pity go! I will do all you wish."

She well nigh pushed the old man's slowly moving form from the apartment, and resumed her seat by the invalid's pillow.

"Yes, yes," she whispered to herself, "mine at last! mine to watch, mine to tend in life or death, till he once more returns to his old distrust and hate. But of what avail is love if only given by love? Rupert, mine is true worship, for I shall never have one answering look or word of tenderness from you; you will never guess what poor Gertrude has sacrificed and suffered for your sake."

There was a faint moan from the bed, so gentle that

she believed it emanated from the sufferer while still in sleep, but she bent noiselessly over the pillow to catch the words.

"Dearest, best loved, how can I thank you? You have been so good, so patient. Kiss me, my own, before I die."

Could it be? Were her wild aspirations to be thus accomplished in death? Was the love that she had risked all to share to be won only to be lost and quenched in the grave? Yet even in that brief moment of possession the thought was a thrilling joy that was worth years of suffering.

She bent over him and pressed her lips to his damp brow, and kissed it again and again, whispering words of passionate tenderness that might well nigh have brought the fleeting spirit back to this lower world had it trembled on the wing.

His eyes opened and a sweet smile parted his pale lips.

"Hilda, darling, precious one! I thought you were dead! Was it a dream? Is it I who have been ill?" he murmured, incoherently.

"Yes, yes," she answered, firmly, though her very pulses seemed to stop their beating with the terrible revulsion from passionate joy to the bitter reality of her grief. "You must be quiet and you will get well now. Try and sleep."

"But do you love me? Will you stay with me?" he said, faintly.

"More than life," was the low, earnest response. "I will not leave you one moment; only sleep and be still."

It was heroism such as many a showy deed does not possess that nerved the crushed spirit of that devoted girl to endure the torturing ordeal. But she bore it bravely.

Calmly and steadily she sat, with the poor, thin hand in hers, whispering from time to time words of soothing love to his half-confused and failing senses, and applying cooling, refreshing essence to his still hot brow.

At length her cares were rewarded. His breathing became more regular and natural, his eyes closed more completely than the ominously half-raised lids had ever done before, the features relaxed, the very hand which held Gertrude's no longer tried to clasp her fingers in its powerless grasp, and at length Gertrude could no longer doubt that real, refreshing, healing sleep had fallen on her patient.

She stole from her post to one safer from the possibility of observation, and threw herself in the large old Windsor chair that stood by the turf fire, in the utter prostration of an exhausted, over-tried frame and spirit.

It was all over. The brief gleam of sunshine had but deepened her gloom. Was it ever to be thus, even to her grave? Was Hilda to cast her shadow across her path even from the depths of her distant tomb?

That very murmur brought its rebuke.

"Call no one happy till he dies," rose to her mind as a voice from above.

The remembrance of that all-but bride, with the full paraphernalia of her state lying in terrible mockery around her deathbed, silenced the natural pang of bitter jealousy in her unhappy cousin's heart.

"Yet she was loved, regretted, mourned even in his wandering delirium," she thought as the rain of tears poured down her pale cheeks. "I have saved, doubly saved him," was the nobler, more animating remembrance.

She would not have changed with Hilda at that moment, no, not if the murdered girl could have risen from her grave to return Rupert's worshipping love.

The blessed influence of a devoted, unselfish spirit living in another's life gradually stole over that tortured, desolate soul.

Gertrude at length yielded to the influence of the still darkness, the relief from present and pressing alarm, and the utter exhaustion of fatigue, till her eyes closed, and she, like her patient, sank into a refreshing and dreamless slumber.

But she had been too long accustomed to incessant watchfulness for her unconsciousness to resist the faintest movement in her charge, and as the faint gleam of the sickly winter daylight stole into the room there was a rustling in the bed, and a low, feeble, but distinct voice murmured:

"Where am I? What does it all mean?" uttered in tones that, however faint and exhausted, yet bore an unmistakable consciousness and reason in their accents than had yet greeted the anxious nurse's ears.

In another instant she was at his side.

His eyes were fixed on her figure, dimly shadowed by the mingled fire blaze and lamp light, to which the approaching dawn of morning lent a yet more uncertain and shadowy hue.

"Who are you? Where am I?" he murmured, eagerly.

"I am your cousin Gertrude. You have had an accident among the mountains, and were brought here. You are better now," she replied, bending down to ensure his comprehension of her soft, low utterance.

A perplexed look came over his features.

"Then you are not Hilda. No, no, I remember now; she is dead—dead. Yet she came in my dreams and told me to avenge her. Did you know this, Ger-

trude?" he added, with a half-questioning, suspicious air.

"Dear Rupert, your illness made you think of many things while the fever lasted," replied the girl, calmly. "You had a severe fall which injured the head and made you insensible for a long time. Thank Heaven you are better now, and only want rest and time to recover."

"But where am I?" he resumed, with a bewildered look around him.

"You are in the dwelling of a good, kind man, near the spot where you met with your accident," was the reply, "and I have nursed you, dear Rupert; that is all the mystery."

"You have nursed me?" he said, slowly. "Gertrude, do you know the truth?"

"I know much, dear cousin, and your mental wanderings have told me more," she said, soothingly. "I am in my inmost heart your sympathizing, true, devoted friend. But we must speak more now; you must be quite quiet," she added, laying her hand on his lips.

"I must—I must, or I shall not rest," he said, fixing his eyes earnestly on her. "Gertrude Mgrave, I have been at death's portals, and all seems strange and new to me now. The truth appears as if no mortal dared to violate it in Heaven's sight, and I adjure you to answer me as you would were you in the awful presence, before which I have been so nearly called. Gertrude, as you would hope for mercy hereafter, are you guilty of Hilda's dreadful, cruel death?"

The girl hesitated for a moment as she answered a question so solemn, framed with all the awe-straining accessories around the speaker and the scene.

It was like a voice from the dead, and, as Rupert observed, it seemed impossible that falsehood could be ventured on by the most hardened in reply. Yet the poor, over-laden nerves well nigh quailed before the crisis, when she must utter what had so long been pent up in her heart, as a deep and unfathomable abyss which none must penetrate.

It was like emerging into sunshine after a long imprisonment in a dungeon—a blessed, yet a blinding, dazzling light.

"No, Rupert, so help me, Heaven. I am as innocent of Hilda's death as a new-born babe, or her own parent. It was pain and grief in itself, as well as in the terrible horrors it brought to me in its train."

"This is true?" resumed Rupert, with a faint attempt at a smile.

"As true as the holy book," she replied, firmly.

"Then may Heaven forgive me, for I have done you cruel wrong," he gasped, faintly, with uplifted hands and quivering lips.

"Dear Rupert, calm yourself; you will suffer for this agitation," she whispered. "Forget all but that your danger is past, and you will soon get well. There, drink this and try to sleep again."

"Better die—better die," he murmured as she held the glass to his lips and placed her arm under his head to raise it while he drank. "Leave me, Gertrude."

But the exhaustion and perhaps the natural love of life prevailed over his agony of remorse and weariness of his long sorrow.

He submitted to Gertrude's gentle behest, and sipped the cooling draught while she arranged the pillows and once more placed him on their support.

He felt rather than noticed her loving cares, but they won their soothing influence over pain and remorse. Again the eyes closed wearily, the brief consciousness subsided into the oblivion of sleep, and once again Gertrude was alone with her sorrow.

Her heart was lighter now. She had two blessed consolations in her danger and her lonely exile.

Rupert was innocent, and for the first time during long weary months she had ventured to shake off the heavy burden of an unrepelled and shameful charge.

She was roused from her abstraction as if from deep sleep by the touch and the low, deep voice of the old tenant of that lone dwelling.

"Child, it is time you took rest; you can do him no more good."

She looked up wearily.

"You are right; I will. He is safe now. He has spoken rationally. Only you must be tender and cautious with him."

He looked keenly at her.

"You remember your promise, child. I will not urge you now; but for his sake and your own you must deal frankly with me. There is a burden on my conscience as on yours, and the grave is gradually opening where reparation is impossible. Now go, and trust in me. I will not destroy your good work by negligence or ungentele dealing."

Gertrude did not contend with the quiet violence that impelled her to the door of the sick chamber, and, with a paternal blessing, dismissed her to rest. Her work was done so far as Rupert's safety was concerned, and, for herself, she could but suffer and die.

For the first time since her arrival in that humble cottage she undressed and slept quietly, refreshingly, in the clean though tiny bed assigned to her. There was a balm in the consciousness of Rupert's near presence, in his confession of her innocence, and tacit declaration of his own, that calmed the feverish pain which had racked her very heart since that dreadful morning at Rose Mount.

It was late in the morning she awoke from her deep sleep, and, as if by Heaven's Providence, renewed in body and in mind for the more fiery trials that were impending.

Happy is it that the future is hidden from view, or small rest and peace would be enjoyed by frail and suffering mortals!

She dressed hastily, as if in excuse for her involuntary abandonment of duty, and hurried down the dwarf staircase to the lower chamber, where Mr. Clinton was awaiting her.

"Is he better—sleeping?" she asked, anxiously.

"Yes; you may calm your fears about him," he replied, abruptly. "He is strong and young; he will do well enough. Old Hester is with him. He has asked for you, but I told him you were sleeping, and worn out, and that he must not expect you would kill yourself for him."

"You said that I—was that your promise?" exclaimed Gertrude, reproachfully, springing up again from her chair before the table on which stood the morning meal of milk, oat-cake, butter, and eggs, which had been waiting for her advent.

But the old man laid his hand firmly on her arm.

"Foolish child!—sit down and listen to me, while you take the refreshment which can alone support you in your Quixotic task. I told you I had reasons for demanding your confidence. Part of it indeed is needless. I can read the truth but too well. It is the old tale of woman's insane self-sacrifice and man's hard ingratitude. You love that hair-breasted youth, and he has well nigh broken heart and neck for some less worthy object. Is that not true?"

A flood of indignant crimson flushed her whole face as the old man spoke.

"You can have no right to demand such confidence as that from me, or to assert such vague fancies," she said, averting her head.

"It is not from caprice, child, that I bring the maiden flush to your pale cheek," he said, more gently, "but solely because I would willingly do some deed that could atone for a sin which weighs heavily on my heart. If I am right in my conjecture I may perhaps give you a secret for your dower that may well win for you a more worthy heart or hand than the one you covet so womanlike and so blindly."

"I cannot understand you," faltered the girl, her fears rising at the least hint of mystery, as is ever the case where there has been a long and terrible suspense shattering the harassed nerves.

"Perhaps not, nor is it needful you should," he returned. "I only ask you to answer me frankly and truly the questions I shall propound to you. And I pledge you the word of one on the very brink of the grave that your confidence shall not be betrayed. Who is this young man? I do not mean what is his name. That I know already—at least, the name he bears. But I want to know his history—his relations—his parentage."

"I can tell you but little, though I do trust and believe you from my heart," said the girl, earnestly. "Mr. De Vere was brought up by my uncle, Mr. Eldred Mgrave, of Rose Mount, as his nephew, and cousin to me and to his own daughter. But I believe there was some painful mystery that clouded his life and produced a bitter estrangement between them. Indeed, Rupert once implied to me that some crushing disgrace had been heaped on him by Mr. Mgrave, but, whether truly or not, I know no more than I do its real nature. All was forgotten in one frightful event soon afterwards," she added, shuddering.

"Do you know his mother's name—I mean her maiden name?" asked Mr. Clinton, sharply.

"It was Mgrave—Sybilla Mgrave," answered the girl. "Do you know aught of her, of him?" she exclaimed, eagerly.

"I know, or rather have known, many who have long since passed from earth," he replied, evasively. "To me the past is like a confused kaleidoscope, only that one or two prominent objects stand out to which others seem to tend. But enough of this!—yet stay. Did you say of 'Rose Mount'? That was not the name I recall," he said, musingly.

"He had other seats—Brierfield Hall was one—but he never lived there," she replied, eagerly.

"Ah, well, I must think; only, if it be as I suspect, I tell you again, child, you would take with you a dower in the knowledge I could place in your power that should win a peer—or, a prince—for your bridegroom. And, if it be ever revealed it shall be through you, and for your sake. A woman's wrongs shall bring bliss to one who is as trusting and far

more unselfish and heroic than she who suffered them. Now go; I can even now hear Hester's croaking voice, and its modulations are scarcely soft enough for an invalid's irritable ears."

Gertrude needed no second bidding. She glided from the room, and sprang up the stairs like a fawn, in her eagerness to resume her post at the invalid's side.

There was a tender gratitude in Rupert's melancholy eyes as they turned on her which contrasted thrillingly with the harsh bitterness they had flashed witheringly on her when they had met at Bernard Thorne's.

"Gertrude—dear cousin," he said, feebly stretching out his hand, "you have saved my life. I have heard all from that rough nurse, so different in her tending to you—poor, injured girl."

"Hush; you must not speak of such things, or you will destroy all I have tried to do," she said, trying to repress the gush of delicious joy that his look and words caused to well up in her heart.

"Yes, I must. You need not fear, Gertrude; I am too miserable to die," he said, with a sad smile. "It is the happy and prosperous who are chosen for the grave; and I am remorseful and wretched."

"Is it so? Can you never forget—must you always love her so hopelessly?" said the girl, despondingly.

"No—at least, not as you would mean, Gertrude," he returned. "I loved Hilda madly—with a fierce passion that well nigh turned my brain—when my love was scornfully, crushingly cast back like a fiery poison into my veins."

"But you did not—oh, Rupert, I surely have comprehended you aright!—you could not speak falsely at such a moment?" faltered the girl, clasping her hands in anxious suspense for his reply.

"No, Gertrude, no—if you mean did I hester Hilda Mgrave's early death, I tell you, every drop of my own blood should have welled out by degrees to lengthen her sweet life. It was not of that I spoke. Did you believe me guilty, Gertrude?" he added, suddenly.

"I know not. I could not tell what such intense passion as yours might have wrought," she said, flushing deeply. "Rupert, I never blamed you even then; I only thought you might be driven to madness beyond your own control."

"Thanks, thanks—at least, for that, Gertrude," he said, sighing. "You had more charity in your heart than I had; but I will try and tell you all if my strength will allow, my cousin. You ask if I love Hilda as passionately—as madly still. It seems, Gertrude, as if the boiling blood had gone from my brain in this terrible illness, and made the past strange and cloudy to me in all its wretched history."

She did not reply, but there was an involuntary squeezing of the hand which he had languidly extended to her grasp which told him of her sympathy—her quick comprehension of his meaning.

"Do you know," he resumed, "I believed it was Hilda who was nursing me during those days and nights of pain, and yet she had your face—your voice; and, listen, Gertrude, my cousin—I felt instinctively that, beautiful, fascinating, entrancing as she appeared in her youth and gay brightness, I knew that she would not have been patient and devoted in sorrow and gloom as you have been. She is like a bright spirit to me now—one to be rather worshipped than loved like a woman—a wife for sorrow and sickness and gloom. Poor, poor Hilda—she seems like a vision of light rather than a mere mortal, so suddenly, so fatally did she vanish from love and joy."

The feeble voice trembled, and there were tears gathering in the sunken eyes as he spoke; and Gertrude—though each word brought a delicious comfort to her heart, and sounded like angel whispers to cheer her long despair—yet hastened to check the dangerous indulgence.

"Rupert, I must leave you if you do not keep quiet and calm; you cannot bear agitation like this yet. Another time you shall say all that is in your heart; I will never weary of listening to you, dear cousin."

She was arranging the curtains, which she had put up with feminine ingenuity to shade his weakened eyes; and she would have retired from his side, but he detained her with a pertinacious hold.

"Gertrude—one moment. Answer me a question, then I will obey your bidding. Why did you fly—why did you not assert your innocence when accused of poor Hilda's death?"

She shrank back, and averted her head from his gaze, but he pressed the question with a feverish eagerness that she dared not increase by suspense.

"Dear cousin, I could not tell—that is, I feared—I fancied—forgive me—I fancied that you might have been maddened to the deed."

"You—you bore the disgrace—the danger, to shield me!" he groaned. "Gertrude, Gertrude, I am a villain! I shall never know peace more!"

"Hush, hush—I know all; you did it in ignorance."

You believed me guilty, and sought justice," she murmured, soothingly.

"You believed me guilty, and sacrificed all to shield me from justice!" he said. "Oh, Gertrude, you are an angel, and I have acted like a fiend!"

"It was madness—you were not master of yourself," she said, gently. "We understand each other better now. We will forget all but the old days, and that we are as brother and sister, dear Rupert. Now you know all, and you must rest."

But though she left him peremptorily, and though the languor of exhaustion still lingered to dull every sense and power, Rupert was long ere he slept again and shut out from his troubled senses the remorse and the terror that haunted him like avenging spectres.

Gertrude's visions were bright and sweet as those of her repentant cousin were dark and threatening. She remained in a happy illusion, such as sometimes is but the precursor of more frightful woes, and would seem to be either the tantalizing mockery that only aggravates the contrast to the reality of wretchedness, or a merciful respite sent by Heaven to refresh and to strengthen for new ordeals of strength and patience.

It was at least a real, tangible truth that Rupert De Vere was guiltless, that he acquitted her as innocent and injured. A loss certain but instinctive perception told her that his heart was returning to his own keeping only to be given to one more worthy and more grateful than the gay and thoughtless and hapless heiress of Rose Mount.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Oh, say, wilt thou weep when they darken the fame Of a life that for thee was resigned?
Yes, weep, and however my foes may condemn,
Thy tears shall efface their decree.

LITTLE did the patient or the nurse in that humble mountain dwelling guess of the suffering that was even more threatening and more touching in its aspect than Rupert's half-retributive pain and danger.

The tortured fairy form, the fevered brow, the wild, suffering eyes, which rent the very heart of one who loved her so well, were but too certain evidences of Madeline Cleveland's agony and risk.

Days had passed since the terrible accident, and Mr. Page's prediction had been but too accurately fulfilled.

The many long hours she had lain in the lowest stage of exhausted feebleness, which gave not even a sign of recognition, scarcely of life, had little in them to cheer the hopes or reward the cares of her surgeon and her attendants.

The nurse had proved kindly and faithful so far as the discharge of her directions went.

Mr. Page seemed to take a real interest in the lovely and romantic patient.

And Philip Dacre? What of him?

Stern, silent, and uncomplaining, he came from day to day, morning, noon, and night to learn the progress, to receive the sad, unchanging bulletins of the sufferer's state.

"She has not spoken. The wounds are not hopeless. There are no unfavourable symptoms in the actual burns," was the reply of the nurse.

And the more alarming supplement ever was:

"There is still danger of fever, and no strength to endure it. Mr. Page gives but little hope, sir."

Mrs. Nelson did not guess the stab that she inflicted with each word.

How could she translate the rigidly composed features, the steady voice, the rational and liberal directions for every indulgence and comfort into an expression of sore agony that was perhaps more pitiable than the fiery pain which racked poor Madeline's frame and exhausted every power, while it happily deadened consciousness by its very intensity?

Thus the time went slowly on, till the third day after the accident, when Philip Dacre ventured to enter the house, whose precincts he haunted like a shadow for the last bulletin ere he sought his own chamber for a troubled rest.

"Any change, Mrs. Nelson?" he asked as the nurse came from the inner chamber at the sound of his familiar step.

He expected only the same monotonous reply, but there was a degree of excitement in the nurse's manner and look that indicated more important tidings.

"Yes, sir. It's just as we feared—a change for the worse, sir. The poor young thing is in a fever now, sir. She woke up as it were soon after you were here in the afternoon, and has been raving, in a sort of gentle way, ever since. Her eyes glitter like coals, poor young creature, and her cheeks are scarlet as a soldier's coat."

Philip did not wait for permission. The next moment he was standing in the sick-room, gazing at the small figure on that couch of pain with calm yet troubled earnestness.

"Who are you?" she muttered, in low, rapid tones

that were scarcely intelligible save when the ear was close to the parched lips. "Are you going to kill me?" she gasped as Philip bent down over her. "Go, go! there is blood enough—blood enough on the conscience!"

"Madeline, dearest, calm yourself. I will defend you with my very life. Whom do you fear?" said Philip, soothingly.

"I fear him—him! but I must not tell. I have sworn, and, you know, I dare not break my oath! It burns, burns! Oh, who is hurting me so cruelly?"

"Madeline, Madeline, you will kill me! I cannot bear it!" exclaimed Philip, tears rushing into his eyes as if he had been a woman instead of a strong, hard-natured man. "My darling, be patient. You will be better soon. I would suffer the pain for you, if I could, my own, my heart's core!"

She seemed to feel the tears dropping on her hot face.

"Is it blood?" she said, fearfully. "Is it blood? Why will it pursue me? I feel it; I see it everywhere."

A violent shudder convulsed her whole frame.

"That's just the way she goes on, sir," muttering, muttering, and shivering as if she'd got the ague, while she's burning, poor soul. I don't know what to do with her in the night if she should go on like this. Mr. Page will be away, for he told me he'd got a very bad case he must go to."

"I shall remain; I shall not leave her. You need not fear," said Philip, gloomily; "perhaps she will not live till morning," he added, hoarsely.

"Oh, yes. She's not so near as that, sir," returned the nurse. "The fever will have its course, then she'll sink, and I don't suppose it will be very long, I must say, but not all of a sudden like that. But I'm glad you'll stop, sir, for as she's alone and with no friends, it's not so pleasant in case of the worst. And the landlady's pretty well tired of the business."

Philip replied only by an impatient nod, as he once more turned to the bedside.

It was indeed a heart-rending sight.

Where was the mother who had given that poor sufferer birth?

Where was the father whose bounden care it was to provide for the young and helpless child?

More terrible question still—one which brought a heavy frown to Philip's brow and a muttered imprecation to his lips—where was he who had betrayed the lonely orphan, then deserted her in the deep labyrinth of guilt and deception, where no clue seemed to exist for extrication?

"Aubrey LeStrange, the vengeance of Heaven will hail down on you for this," he said, hoarsely, as Mrs. Nelson retired to seek some necessary for the patient. "Innocent or guilty, this poor, stricken one will have her wrongs go up to the sky in mute evidence against your cruel perfidy."

"Hush, hush. Who speaks of evidence?" whispered the girl, feebly, and with a look of terror in her glittering eyes. "You know I never did, I never will betray it, only that link—that snapt link—I must keep that you know, lest the innocent should suffer."

"Where is it then, this link?" whispered Philip, gently.

She started as if a bomb shell had struck her.

"Ah, you want to find out," she said, "but you shall not, I have taken care of that. It is safe, safe, in my very heart, you know, and if that be taken I should die."

"Madeline, my love, my angel. You shall not die, I will shield you with my very life," exclaimed Philip, passionately, bending over her, and pressing his lips to her parched mouth. "Only trust me, tell me all—tell me where is this proof—this fatal link—and I will destroy it, if it would damage you, my beloved, my treasure—oh, if you would but confide in me, my precious one."

She fixed her eyes on him questioningly.

"Who are you?" she said. "I feel giddy, I do not know anything, and it burns so, yet your voice seems pleasant and kind."

"Madeline, I am your friend, your lover, one who will never know happiness save you, whose life is bound up with yours. You are mine—mine if love can avail to cement such ties, and I implore, I adjure you to tell me the truth. Madeline, I will protect, shield, shelter, love you through shame, through reproach, till death itself. Only tell me the way in which I can aid you. Madeline, who did that foul deed? If it was you, even your hands that I thus hold in mine, I will forgive, help, hide you in my very heart of heart, from every eye, from every reproach. Only confess, trust me, love me, my poor, sinking, wounded dove."

A gleam of consciousness seemed to recur to the sufferer's fevered brain as the passionate words were breathed in her ears.

"I believe you. You look good and kind, and

your voice has truth in it," she said, more softly. "But while I live I must not tell the secret."

"But if you died," remonstrated Philip, bent on a last attempt to extract the truth, "what then, my Madeline? Would not all the evil you fear come then to the innocent?"

"No, no," she said, shaking her head with the significant cunning of wandering brains. "I have taken care of that. There is a paper you know, and, besides, she can tell. She has a knowledge of it all—all."

"Who is she, my precious one?" pursued Philip, anxious to wind out the tempting clue thus offered.

But in vain the waywardness of delirium once more diverted the fevered brain.

"No, no, no. The link—the link will tell. And the innocent shall not suffer," was all she could reply.

The return of the nurse stopped all farther efforts on his part to complete the tantalizing half-confidence.

Oh, how wearily did the hours of that long, dark night pass for that agonized patient—that loving, anxious watcher!

Every minute Madeline's face seemed to heighten in intensity, and her incoherent ravings became less intelligible and more violent. One instant she would bury her face in the clothes, as if to shut out some painful vision; the next she would wildly toss her arms, shrieking out:

"Save him! Save him! There is wealth—wealth to be won by betrayal; and he is at their mercy! Shall I? No, no, no—not for all that fatal gold! Would it not be sin to bribe for human blood?"

Then the paroxysm would pass, and she would lay in temporary and deep exhaustion on her pillow.

Philip could interpret in part these wanderings. The estates, the wealth of the Murgaves were held out as a bribe for revenge on the murder of their heiress.

This desolate Pariah was content to live in obscurity, labour, and self-denial, rather than accept the price of blood.

Was it wonder if he gazed with something like reverence on that hapless girl, lying under so misty a cloud on that lowly bed of suffering, when he recalled the magnitude of the temptation to betray a secret so evidently in her keeping?

Was it wonder if he again registered a vow that, if her life were spared, Madeline Cleveland should be his bride, and that if snatched from him by death no other woman should fill her place in his heart and his home?

The angel of death seemed to have winged his flight from Rupert De Vere's chamber to the humble apartment of Madeline Cleveland.

The young man was once again freed from that dark, gloomy shadow, and enabled to breathe freely in light and in life.

He had regained strength with extraordinary rapidity so as to enable him to leave his bed and his chamber in far less time than an ordinary patient might have rallied to the slightest exertion, and once again Gertrude's task was complete so far as the safety of her charge from any imminent danger or even urgent weakness to require care and nursing.

And with that the girl's very energies seemed to droop, and she shrank, as it were, into herself apart from him whom she had tended so unceasingly, and the old host who remained in the same strange, church-like, reserved state as on Gertrude's first interview with him.

Still she did not cease to watch either the older or younger of her companions with a lynx-like eagerness that they little suspected.

She only awaited a chance to claim Mr. Clinton's pledge as to the partaking of his promised secret. She only waited till that was revealed to implore Rupert to leave the dangerous neighbourhood of Aubrey LeStrange, and the nets that were spread by his perfidy for the innocent as well as the guilty.

Fully, thankfully as she believed in Rupert's innocence, she felt as if a glamour was over them, and that till Heaven's Providence should bring the truth to light it were impossible to dream of safety for either her cousin or herself.

And Rupert De Vere, albeit there was perhaps a latent selfishness that shrank from chasing from him his greatest comfort, his only sunbeam, by bidding Gertrude depart—and bewildered as to any choice of a safer refuge for her exile—yet mused with deep and repentant anxiety on the risks which surrounded that delicate, heroic girl, even while shame kept his lips sealed on the strongest motives for her flight.

Even yet Rupert's nature was scarcely purged from the passionate and wayward self-seeking that had cost him so dear.

And the intense love that had well nigh maddened him when Hilda was refused to his prayer was in a less degree actuating him in his reluctance to confess

his full turpitude, and deprive his weak and shattered spirit of the soothing and animating companionship of the devoted and brave Gertrude in his enforced solitude.

But as strength returned, and his brain regained some of its former power to will and to plan, this base cowardice gradually yielded to nobler impulses, and again and again he resolved on the next occasion to reveal all, and warn his injured cousin of her full danger and his own savage cruelty.

And as often the soft tones of her voice, the feminine charm of her ingenious cares for his comfort, the dread of the utter repugnance he expected to see in the eyes, the gesture, the voice which he was daily learning to watch with clinging, dependent love, prevailed over the dictates of truth and candour.

And the occasion was again lost, only for fresh repentance and fresh resolutions.

At length the crisis came which he had so long feared and yet hoped.

Mr. Clinton had gone out for his daily walk, and Rupert, who had a slight return of feverishness on that morning, which Gertrude in her sensitive lovingness magnified into danger of a relapse, prayed her to waive her usual custom of accompanying their aged host. So she remained, quietly pursuing her task of knitting for old Hester, trusting that the invalid might find the best remedy in sleep.

But it was useless.

The young man's brain was too much excited for sleep, and Gertrude's very stillness was almost irritating to him in his own restlessness.

At length he called her to a seat nearer to his old-fashioned, comfortable sofa, with a desperate suddenness that betokened some unusual resolve, that brought a sudden thrill to the girl's breast.

What was she about to hear?

There had been something in his manner of late that she would scarcely confess even to herself, but it might well have justified a maidenly throb at the abrupt summons to his side.

"Gertrude," he exclaimed, suddenly, "you have never even yet asked me what brought me to this distant region, and caused the catastrophe that, but for your care, would have been fatal to me. And I—I have been too mean and cowardly to avow it and risk your last generous impulse of pity and regard; but I will at least deserve your mercy by a full confession, even if you shrink from me in disgust and loathing at the knowledge. Gertrude, it was in search of you—to track you out like a bloodhound, to deliver you to justice, or rather to vengeance—that I came. Aubrey LeStrange was my coadjutor in my wretched, mad cruelty. It was he who indicated the best method of securing our object, and of destroying your refuge and your protector by a base betrayal of our suspicions, and of your identity with Hilda's murderer. Now you know all. Can you ever look on me without horror and contempt more?"

With a placid, angelic smile she placed her hands on his, which were clasped over his face.

"I know it already, Rupert. Aubrey LeStrange had told me all in his jealous resentment and anger. It was from his mercenary suit I fled—a suit instigated by his uncle's mistaken goodness and care for me. And, thank Heaven, it was in time to save you, and through its providence I was led to this humble asylum, as if for that very purpose."

"To be conveniently ready till my plans were complete," said a strange voice through the open window, that brought a faint shriek to Gertrude's lips and a dark scowl to Rupert's brow.

In another moment Aubrey LeStrange was in the small apartment, with a sardonic smile on his now haggard and worn features.

"Yes," he said, bitterly, "I am just in time to confirm Mr. De Vere's information, and save Miss Gertrude Mgrave from farther uneasiness as to my wish to make her my bride. And the companion I have brought with me to her retreat is not a clergyman but an officer of justice to place a fetter on her liberty for life!"

(To be continued.)

CURIOUS EXPERIMENT.—Mr. Croocing points out the following mode of determining which of two objects seen from a distance is farther off than the other: Let the reader suppose two trees, for instance, standing in a line with the eye; if he moves his eye to the right the tree which is nearer will appear to move to the left, and the other will seem to follow the motion of the eye.

LIVERPOOL AUTUMN EXHIBITION.—The Report of the Fine Arts Committee upon the Autumn Exhibition of Pictures, Liverpool, 1871, states that the exhibition was visited by nearly 23,000 persons on payment, and that 313 season tickets were sold. 6,000 persons were admitted without payment. The number of works exhibited was 908, of which 235 were sold for sums amounting to 6,395*l.*; 500*l.* was expended by the Town Council in buying pictures

for the permanent gallery of art now forming. The total receipts were 1,481*l.*, leaving a profit of 600*l.* These results are very encouraging, but strenuous exertions will be required if they are to recur or to be surpassed. The committee urges artists to paint expressly for this Exhibition, because it believes that works which have been seen by the public in London or elsewhere have lost some of their attractions. It is proposed to devote the profits of future exhibitions to the purchase of pictures for the permanent gallery.

A DARING GAME;

OR,
NEVA'S THREE LOVERS.

CHAPTER XI.

It was still early upon the evening of Neva's return to Hawkhurst when Craven Black took his leave of the handsome widow and set out upon his walk to Wyndham.

The summer night was filled with a light, pleasant aroma; and the songs of the nightingales, the chirping and drumming of insects in the Hawkhurst park and plantations, made the air musical.

But Craven Black gave no heed to these things as he strode along over the hilly road. His mind was busy with the scheme that had been suggested to him that evening by Lady Wynde, and as he hurried along he muttered:

"It's a good idea, if well worked out. But there's no finesse in it. It's too simple, if it has any fault. The girl may see through it, although that's not likely. People who are guileless themselves are not apt to suspect guile in others. We shall have no difficulty with her. The only one who can balk our plans is that obstinate boy of mine, whom I have not seen since he shut himself up in his chamber. I must know his decision before I move a step farther in this business. Of course he will yield to me; he has never dared pit his will against mine, and say to my face that he would not obey me. Poor, weak coward! If he should dare cling to that girl he married, I'll risk the exposure and disgrace, and have the marriage legally set aside on the ground of his minority. By Heaven, if he dare to beard me, he shall find me a very tiger!"

He set his teeth together and his breath came hissing between them as he strode heavily along the village street and approached the Wyndham inn.

He saw that his own rooms were lighted, and that the apartment which he had assigned his son was dark. The fear came to him that Rufus had stolen away and returned to his young wife with the mad idea of flying with her, and, muttering an imprecation upon the boy, he hurried into the inn and sped swiftly up the stairs, halting at his son's door, with his hand on the knob.

It did not yield to his touch. The door was locked from within.

Rufus must be within that darkened chamber, and as this conviction came to him Craven Black recovered all his coolness and self-possession. He crossed the hall, entered his own room and procured a lighted lamp, then returned and knocked loudly on his son's door.

No voice answered him. No sound came from within the room.

"Can he have committed suicide?" Craven Black asked himself, with a sudden fluttering at his heart. "He was desperate enough, but I hardly think he could have been so foolish as that."

He shook the door loudly, but eliciting no reply he stooped to the key-hole, and cried, in a clear, hissing whisper:

"Rufus, open this door, or I'll break it in! I'll rouse the whole house. Quick, I say! Be lively!"

There was a faint stir within the room as if a tortured wild beast were sluggishly turning in his cage, then an irresolute step crossed the floor, and an unsteady hand groped feebly about the door, seeking the key. The bolt suddenly shot back and the faltering steps retreated a few paces.

Craven Black opened the door and entered the room, closing the door behind him. He set down his lamp, and his light eyes then sought out the form of his son.

Rufus stood in the centre of the room, his eyes covered with one hand to shade them from the sudden light, his figure drooping and abject, his head bowed to his breast, his mouth white and drawn with lines of pain. It seemed as if years had passed over his head since the morning.

It would have been scarcely possible to trace in this spiritless, slouching figure, in this white, haggard face, the boy artist who had left his young wife that morning. All the brightness, elasticity, and youth seemed gone from him, leaving only a poor, broken wreck.

The cynical smile that was so characteristic of

Craven Black's countenance came back to his lips as he looked upon his son. He read in the changed aspect of the boy that he had achieved a victory over Rufus.

"I have come for your decision, Rufus," he said, "What is it to be? Disgrace, imprisonment, a blighted name? Or will you turn from your low-born adventures and accept the career I have marked out for you? Speak!"

The hand that shaded the artist's eyes dropped, and he looked at his father with a countenance so wan, so woe-filled, so despairing, that a very demon might have pitied him. Yet his father only smiled at what he deemed the evidence of the lad's weakness.

"Oh, father," said the young man, hollowly, "will you not have mercy upon me—upon her?"

"None!" replied Craven Black, curtly. "Again I demand your choice!"

Rufus wrung his hands in wild despair.

"If I abandon her what will become of her?" he moaned. "She will die of starvation! My poor little wife!"

"Do not call her again by that title!" cried Craven Black, frowning. "Can you not comprehend that the marriage is illegal—is null and void—that she is not your wife? When she hears the truth she will turn from you with loathing. As to her support, I will provide for her. She shall not starve, as she will do if you be sent to prison for perjury. For the last time I demand your decision. Will you give up the girl peaceably, or will you be forced to?"

There was a moment of dead silence. Then the answer came brokenly from the young man's lips.

"I—I give her up!" he muttered. "Heaven help us both!"

"It is well," declared Craven Black, more kindly. "You could not do otherwise. You like the girl now, but a year hence you will smile at your present folly. Why should you fling away all your possibilities of wealth and honour for a silly boyish fancy? Cheer up, Rufus. Throw aside all that despair, and accept the goods that fate bestows. The girl will marry some one else, as you must do. Your future bride has arrived at Hawkhurst, and to-morrow evening I shall take you to call upon her. I suppose you have eaten nothing since the morning, and your first need is supper."

He rang the bell vigorously, and to the servant who came up gave an order for supper to be served in his own parlour. Taking up his lamp, and drawing his son's arm through his, he conducted Rufus to his own rooms, and seated him in an easy-chair.

The young man's head fell forward on his breast and he sat in silence; but Craven Black, rendered good-natured by the success of his schemes, talked at considerable length of the revenues of Hawkhurst, the perfections of Lady Wynde, and of Neva, whom he had not yet seen.

The supper of cold game was brought up, and Mr. Black ordered two bottles of wine. Rufus refused to eat, having, as he declared, no appetite; but he drank an entire bottle of wine with a recklessness he had never before displayed, and was finally prevailed upon to take food. When he had finished he arose abruptly and retired to his own chamber.

The waiter removed the remains of the supper, and Craven Black was left alone. He sat a little while in his chair with a complacent smile on his fair visage, then arose and locked his door, and brought forward his small inlaid writing-desk and deposited it upon the table.

He produced from his pocket a small packet which Lady Wynde had given him that evening, and opened it. It contained a dozen sheets of note paper, of the style Sir Harold had liked and had habitually used. It was a heavy cream-coloured vellum paper, unlined, and very thick and smooth. Upon the upper half of the first page was engraven in black and gold the baronet's monogram and crest, and below these to the right, in quaint black and gold letters, were stamped the words "Hawkhurst, Kent." It was upon paper like this that nearly all of Sir Harold's letters to his daughter had been written.

A dozen square envelopes similarly adorned with crest and monogram accompanied the paper; and a tiny vial of a peculiar black ink, a half-stick of bronze wax, Sir Harold's seal, and a half-dozen letters, comprised the remaining contents of the packet.

The curtains were drawn across the windows, and Mr. Black had carefully veiled the key-hole of his door, so he leaned back in his chair with a pleasant feeling of security, and engaged in the study of the letters. Five of them had been written by Sir Harold to his wife during the early part of his visit to India, and bore the Indian postmark.

The sixth letter had been an enclosure in one of those to Lady Wynde, and was addressed to Neva. It had evidently been thus enclosed by Sir Harold under the impression that Neva would spend her midsummer holidays at Hawkhurst in the absence of her father.

The letter had been opened by Lady Wynde and read, and she had thrown it aside, without thought of delivering it to its rightful owner.

"How the baronet adored his wife!" thought Craven Black as he carefully perused the letters. "What a depth of passion these letters show. It is strange that Octavia should not have been touched and pleased by his devotion, and learned to return it. But she had an equal passion for me, and thought of him only as an obstacle to be removed from her path. I never loved a woman as Sir Harold loved her. I do not think I am capable of such intense devotion. I am fond of Octavia—fonder of her than I ever was of woman before. She is handsome, stately and keen-witted. Her tastes and mine are similar. She will make me a rich man, and consequently a happy one. Four thousand a year from her and ten thousand a year from Rufus when he marries Miss Wynde. That won't be bad. I could marry an African with prospects such as these!"

He studied the style of the composition, the peculiar expression, and the penmanship, at great length, then took up Sir Harold's intercepted letter to his daughter.

It was very tender and loving, and was written in a deep gloom after the death of the baronet's son in India.

It declared that the father felt a strange conviction that he should never see again his home, his wife, or his daughter, and he conjured Neva by her love for him to be gentle, loving and obedient to her step-mother, to soothe Lady Wynde in the anguish his death would cause her, if his forebodings proved true, and he should die in India.

"Women are mostly stupid!" muttered Craven Black, impatiently. "Why didn't Octavia send the girl this letter? Probably because Sir Harold mentions in it her probable anguish at his loss, and she was waiting impatiently for the hour of her second marriage. Sir Harold writes as if he had expected his daughter to spend her summer holidays at Hawkhurst, and Octavia did not want her here at that time. The girl must have the letter. It will strengthen Octavia's influence over her immensely."

After an hour's keen study, Craven Black seized pen and ink and carefully imitated upon scraps of paper the peculiar and characteristic handwriting of Sir Harold.

He had a singular aptitude for this sort of forgery, and devoted himself to his task with genuine zeal. He wrote out a letter with careful delineation, studying the effect of every line, incorporating some of the favorite expressions of the baronet, and this he proceeded to copy upon a sheet of the paper Lady Wynde had given him, and in a curiously exact imitation of Sir Harold's penmanship.

He worked for hours upon the letter, finishing it to his satisfaction only at daybreak of the following morning.

His nefarious composition purported to be a last letter from Sir Harold Wynde to his daughter, written the night before his tragic death in India, and under a terrible gloom and foreboding of approaching death!

The forger began the letter with a declaration of the most tender, paternal love for Neva, on the part of the father in whose name he wrote, and declared that he believed himself standing upon the brink of eternity, and therefore wrote these few last lines to Neva, which he desired her to receive as an addendum to his last will and testament.

The letter went on to state that Sir Harold adored his beautiful wife, but that as she was still young it was not his wish that she should spend the remainder of her life in mourning for him. He desired her to marry again, to form new ties, to take a fresh lease of life, and to make another as happy as she had made him!

This message he wished to be delivered to Lady Wynde from his daughter's lips, as his last message to the wife he had worshipped.

Now came in the subtle point of the forged missive. As if from the pen and heart of Sir Harold Wynde, the letter went on to say that the father was full of anxieties in regard to his daughter's future. She was young, an heiress, and would perhaps become a prey to a fortune-hunter. From this fate he desired with all his soul to save her.

"I think I should rise in my grave if my loving, tender little Neva were to marry a man who sought her for her wealth," the forged letter said. "If I die here, I have a last request to make of you, my child, and I know that your father's last wish will be held sacred by you. If I do not die, this letter will never be delivered to you. I shall send it to the care of Octavia, to be given to you in the case of my death. I know not why this strange gloom has come upon me, but I have a premonition that my death is near. I shall not see you again in life, my child, my poor little Neva, but if you obey my last request I shall know it in heaven."

"My request is this. I have long taken a keen interest in the character and career of a young man now at Oxford. His talents are good, his character noble and elevated, his principles excellent. His name is Rufus Black. He comes of a fine old family, but he is not rich. There is not a man in the world to whom I would give you so readily as to Rufus Black. He will come to see you at Hawkhurst some day when the edge of your grief for me has worn away, and for my sake treat him kindly. If he should ask you to marry him, consent. I shall rest more easily in my grave if you are his wife."

"My child, your father's voice speaks to you from the grave; your father's arm is stretched out to protect you in your desolation and helplessness. I lay upon you no commands, but I pray you, by your love for me, to marry Rufus Black if he come to woo you. And as you heed this, my last request, so may you be happy."

There was another page or two of similar purport, then the letter closed with a few last tender words, and the name of Sir Harold Wynde.

"It will do, I think," said Craven Black, exultantly. "I might have made it stronger, ordered her to marry Rufus under penalty of a father's curse, but that would not have been like Sir Harold Wynde and she might have suspected the letter to be a forgery. As it is, Sir Harold himself would hardly dare to deny the handwriting as his own, should his spirit walk in here. I've managed the letter with the requisite delicacy and caution, and there can be no doubt of the result. The handwriting is perfect."

He enclosed the letter, and addressed it to Miss Neva Wynde, sealing it with the bronze wax, and Sir Harold's private seal. Then he put the sealed letter into a larger envelope, that which had enclosed the baronet's last letter to his wife from India. The letter which had come in this envelope was written upon three pages, and contained nothing at variance with his forged missive.

Upon the fourth and blank page of Sir Harold's last letter he forged a postscript, enjoining Lady Wynde to give the enclosure—the forgery—to Neva, in case of his death in India, but to keep it one year, until her school-days were ended, and the first bitterness of grief at her father's death had passed.

Craven Black made up the double letter into a thick packet resembling a book, and addressed it to Lady Wynde.

He gathered together all his scraps of paper and the envelopes remaining, and burned them, and cleared away the evidences of his night's work.

He extinguished the lights, drew back his curtains, opened his windows to the summer morning breeze, and flung himself on a sofa and went to sleep.

He was awakened about eight o'clock by the waiter at the door with his breakfast. He arose yawning, gave the waiter admittance, and summoned a messenger, whom he despatched to Hawkhurst, early as was the hour, with orders to give the packet he had made into the hands of Lady Wynde or Mrs. Atreese, Lady Wynde's companion.

"Atreese will be on the look-out for him," thought Craven Black. "She will meet the messenger at the lodge gates and carry the packet herself to Octavia. So that is arranged!"

He summoned his son to breakfast, and presently Rufus came in, worn and haggard, having evidently passed a sleepless night.

The two men ate their breakfast without speaking. After the meal, when the tray had been removed, Rufus would have withdrawn, but his father commanded him to remain.

"I want you to write a letter to that girl at New Brompton," said Craven Black, in the tone that always compelled the abject obedience of his son. "Tell her it is all over between you—that she is not your wife—that you shall never see her again!"

"I cannot—I cannot! I must see her again. I must break the news to her tenderly."

"Do as I say! There are writing materials on my desk. Write the letter I have ordered, or, by Heaven, I'll summon a constable on the spot!"

Rufus sobbed pitifully, and turned away to hide his weakness. He was but a boy, a poor, weak, cowardly boy, afraid of his father, unable to earn a living for himself and Lally, unable even to support himself, and he had actually gained his marriage licence by committing perjury—swearing that he was of age, and his own master. He had laid a trap for himself in that wrong act, and was now entangled in the snare.

He felt himself helpless in his father's hands, and sat down at the desk, and with tear-blinded eyes and unsteady hand, dashed off a wild, incoherent letter to his poor young wife, telling her that their marriage was null and void—that she was not his wife—and that they two must never meet again. When he had appended his name he bowed his head on his arms and wept aloud.

Craven Black coolly perused the letter and approved it. He folded it, and put it in his pocket-book.

"I will take it to her," he said, quietly. "My cab is at the door, and I am ready to start for London. I shall take the half-past ten express, if I can reach Canterbury in time. You will await my return here. I shall be back before evening. Reconcile yourself to your fate, Rufus, and don't look so woe-begone. I shall expect to find you in a better frame of mind when I return. As to the girl, I will provide for her liberally. Fortunately I am in funds just now. I shall send her away somewhere where she will never cross your path again!"

Without another glance at his son, he took up his hat and went out.

The rumbling of the departing wheels, as they bore Craven Black on his way to Canterbury, aroused Rufus from his stupor. That sound was to him the knell of his happiness!

CHAPTER XII.

As the hours wore on after Rufus Black's departure from the dingy little lodging he had called home, poor Lally became anxious and troubled.

Her young husband had inspired her with a great awe for his father, as well as terror of him, but she was a brave little soul and prayed with all her heart that Rufus would have courage to confess his marriage, let the consequences of that confession be what they would.

She had a horror of concealment or deception, and she believed that Craven Black would relent toward his son when he should discover that he was really married.

As the afternoon of that first day of solitude wore on, and the hour for Rufus's return drew near, she swept and dusted and garnished the dreary little room as well as she could, put the shining tin kettle on the grate, and made her simple toilet, putting on her best dress, a cheap pink lawn that contrasted well with her berry-brown complexion, and winding a pink ribbon in her hair.

She looked very pretty and fresh and bright when she had finished, and she stood by the window, her face pressed to the glass, all hopefulness and expectancy, and looked out upon the opposite side of the crescent until long after the hour appointed for her husband's return.

But when evening came on and the gas lamps were lighted in the streets, her expectancy was changed to a terrible anxiety, and she put on her shabby little hat and hurried out to a little news-shop, investing a penny in an evening paper, with a vague idea that there must have been an accident on the line, that her husband had perhaps been killed.

But no accident being reported, she returned to her poor little home, and waited for him with what patience she could summon. But he came not, and no message, letter, or telegram came to allay her fears.

She waited for him until midnight, hearkening to every step in the street, then lay down without undressing, consoling herself with the thought that Rufus would be home in the morning.

But morning came, and Rufus did not appear. Poor Lally was too anxious to prepare her breakfast, and sustained her strength by eating a piece of bread while she watched from the window.

She assured herself that it was all right, that Rufus's prolonged absence was a sign that he had reconciled himself with his father, and that probably he would return in company with his parent. This idea prompted her to brush her tangled waves of hair, and to press out her tumbled dress and otherwise make herself presentable.

As the day deepened a conviction that something had happened that was adverse to her happiness dawned upon her. It was not like Rufus to leave her in such suspense, and she was sure that some harm had come to him.

"Perhaps he has been murdered and thrown out of the railway carriage," she thought, her round eyes growing big with horror. "I will go to Wyndham by the next train."

She was about to put on her hat when her landlady, a coarse, ill-bred woman, opened the door, unceremoniously, and entered her presence.

"Going out, Mrs. Black?" she demanded, with a sniff of suspicion. "I hope you are not going off, like the last lodger I had in this 'ere blessed room, without paying of the rent? I hope you don't intend to give me the slip, Mrs. Black, which you've got no clothes nor furniture to pay the rent, and you owing ten and sixpence."

"I have the money for the rent, Mrs. McKellar," answered Lally, producing her pocket-book, while her childish face flushed. "I have no intention of giving you the slip, as you call it. I—I am going down into the country to look for my husband. Here is your pay."

The landlady took her money with an air of relief. Her greed satisfied, her curiosity became ascendant.

"Where is Mr. Black, if I may be so bold?" she inquired. "It's not like him to be away over night. But young men will be young men, Mrs. Black, whether they are young gentlemen or otherwise, and they will have their spree, you know, Mrs. Black, although I would say that Mr. Black seemed as steady a young gentleman as one could wish to see."

"He is steady," asserted the young wife, half indignantly. "He never goes on a spree. He—he went to his father, and said he would be back last night. Oh, I am so anxious!" she cried, her terrors getting the better of her reserve. "I am sure he would never have stayed away like this if something had not happened to him."

"Perhaps he's deserted you?" suggested her Job's comforter. "Men desert their wives every day. Lawks! What is that?" the landlady ejaculated as a loud double knock was heard on the street door. "It's not the postman. Perhaps Mr. Black has been killed, and they're bringing home his body."

The poor young wife uttered a wild shriek and flew to the head of the stairs, the ponderous landlady hurrying after her, and reaching her side just as the slipshod maid-servant opened the door, giving admittance to Craven Black.

The landlady descended the stairs noisily, and Lally retreated to her room.

She had hardly gained it when Mr. Black came up the stairs alone and knocked at the door. She gave him admittance, her big round eyes full of questioning terror, her pale lips framing the words:

"My husband?"

Mr. Black, holding his hat in his hand, closed the door behind him. He bowed politely to the scared young creature, and demanded:

"You are Miss Lally Bird?"

The slight, childish figure drew itself up proudly, and the quivering voice tried to answer calmly:

"No, sir; I am Mrs. Rufus Black. My name used to be Lally Bird. Do—do you come from my husband?"

"I come from Mr. Rufus Black," replied Craven Black, politely. "I am the bearer of a note from him, but must precede its delivery with an explanation. Mr. Black is now in Kent, and will remain there for the summer."

"I—I don't understand you, sir," said poor Lally, bewildered.

There was a rustling outside the door as the landlady settled herself at the key-hole in an attitude to listen to the conversation between Lally and her visitor. Mrs. McKellar was convinced that there was some mystery connected with her fourth-floor lodgers, and she deemed this a favourable opportunity of solving it.

"Permit me to introduce myself to you, Miss Bird," said her visitor, still courteously. "I am Craven Black, the father of Rufus."

The young wife gasped with surprise, and her face whitened suddenly. She sat down abruptly, with her hand upon her heart.

"His father?" she murmured.

Craven Black bowed, while he regarded her and her surroundings curiously. The dingy, poverty-stricken little room, with its meagre appointments and no luxuries, struck him as being but one remove from an almshouse.

The young wife, in her wretchedly poor attire, with her big black eyes and brown face, from which all colour had been stricken by his announcement, seemed to him a very common-place young person, quite of the lower orders, and he wondered that his university-bred son could have loved her, and that he still desired to cling to her and his poverty rather than to leave her and wed an heiress.

For a moment or more Lally remained motionless and stupefied, then the colour flashed back to her cheeks and lips, and the brightness to her eyes. She could interpret the visit of Craven Black in but one manner—as a token of his reconciliation with his son.

"Oh, sir, I beg your pardon," she said, rising to her feet; "but I was sorely frightened. I have been so anxious about Rufus. I expected him home last night. And I could not dream that you would come to our poor home."

She placed a chair for him, but he continued standing, hat in hand, and leaned carelessly upon the chair back.

He was the picture of elegance and cool serenity, while Lally, flushed and excited, glanced down at her own attire in dismay.

"I understand that Rufus has remained in Kent," she said, breathless and joyous, "and I suppose you have been kind enough to come to take me to him. I fear I am hardly fit to accompany you, Mr. Black. We have been so poor—so terribly poor."

But I will be ready in a moment. Oh, I am so grateful to you, sir, for your goodness to us. Poor Rufus feared your anger more than all things else. I know I am no fit match for your son, but—but I love him so, and the bright face drooped shyly. "I will be a good wife to him, sir, and a good daughter to you."

"Stay," said Mr. Black, in a cold, metallic voice. "You are labouring under a misapprehension, Miss Bird. I am not come to take you down into Kent. You will never look upon the face of Rufus Black again."

"Sir!"

"I mean it, madam. I pity you from my soul; I do indeed. It were better for you if you had never seen Rufus Black. You fancy yourself his wife. You are not so."

"Not his wife? Oh, sir, then you do not know? Why, we were married at St. Mary's Church, in the parish of Newington. Our marriage is registered there, and Rufus has a certificate of the marriage."

"But still you are not married," said the pitiless visitor, his keen eyes lancing the soul of the tortured girl.

"Permit me to explain. My son procured a marriage licence, and he made oath that you and he were both of age, and legally your own masters. He swore to a falsehood. Now that is perjury. A marriage of minors without consent of parents is null and void, and my consent was not given. Your marriage is illegal, is no marriage at all. You are as free and Rufus is as free as if this little episode had not been."

"Oh, Heaven!" moaned the young girl, in a wild, strained voice, sinking back into a chair.

"Not married—not his wife!"

"You are not his wife," declared Craven Black, mercilessly. "I cannot comprehend by what fascination you lured my son into this connection with you, but no doubt he was equally to blame. He is well born and well connected. You are neither. A marriage between you and him is something preposterous. I have no fancy for an alliance with the family of a tallow-chandler. I speak plainly, because delicacy is out of place in handling this affair. You are of one grade in life, we of another. I recognize your ambition and desire to rise in the world, but it must not be done at my expense."

"Ambition?" repeated poor Lally, putting her hand to her forehead. "I never thought of rising in the world when I married Rufus. I loved him, and he loved me. We meant to work together, and we have been so happy. Oh, I am married to him! Do not say that I am not. I am his wife, Mr. Black. I am his own wife!"

"I repeat that you are not," said Mr. Black, harshly. "The law will not recognize such a marriage. If you persist in clinging to the prize you fancy you have hooked, I will have Rufus arrested on the charge of perjury and sent to prison!"

Lally uttered a cry of horror.

Her eyes dilated, her thin chest heaved, her black eyes burned with the fires that raged in her young soul.

"Rufus has recognized the stern necessity of the case, and full of fears for his own safety he has given you up," continued Lally's persecutor. "He will never see you again, and desires you, if you have any regard for him and his safety, to quietly give him up, and glide back into your own proper sphere."

"I will not give him up!" cried Lally; "never! never! Not until his own lips tell me so! You are cruel, but you cannot deceive me. I am his own wife, and I will never give him up!"

"Read that!" said Mr. Black, producing the note his son had written. "I presume you know his handwriting?"

He tossed to Lally the folded paper.

She seized it and read it eagerly, her face growing white and rigid like stone. She knew that handwriting only too well.

In this letter Rufus confirmed his father's words, and utterly renounced her. A conviction of the truth settled down like a funeral pall upon her young soul.

"You begin to believe me, I see," said Mr. Black, growing uncomfortable under the awful stare of her horrified eyes. "You comprehend at last that you are no wife?"

"What am I then?" the pale lips whispered.

"Don't look at me in that way, Miss Bird. Really you frighten me. Don't take this thing too much to heart. Of course it's a disappointment and all that, but the affair won't hurt you as if you belonged to a higher class in life. It's a mere episode, and people will forget it. You can resume your maiden name and occupations, and marry some one in your own class, and some day you will smile at this adventure!"

"Smile? Ah, Heaven!"

Poor Lally cowered in her chair, her small wan

face so full of woe and despair that even Craven Black, villain as he was, grew uneasy.

There was an appalled look in her eyes, too, that scared him.

"You take the thing too hardly, Miss Bird," he said. "I will provide for you. Rufus must not see you again, and I must have your promise to leave him unmolested. Give me that promise and I will deal liberally with you. You must not follow him into Kent. Should you meet him in the street or elsewhere, you must not speak to him. Do you understand? If you do he will suffer in prison for your contumacy!"

"Oh, Heaven be merciful to me!" wailed the poor, disowned young wife. "See him and not speak to him—meet him and pass him by, when I love him better than my life? Oh, Mr. Black, in the name of Heaven, I beg you to have pity upon us. I know I am poor and humble, but I love your son. We are of equal station in the sight of Heaven, and my love for Rufus makes me his equal. He loves me still—he loves me—"

"Do not deceive yourself with false hopes," interposed Craven Black. "My son recognizes the invalidity of his marriage, and has succumbed to my will. If you know him well you know his weak, cowardly nature. He has agreed never to speak to you again, and, moreover, he has promised to marry a young lady for whom I have long intended him—"

A sharp, shrill cry of doubt and horror broke from poor, wronged Lally.

"It is true," affirmed Craven Black.

The girl uttered no farther moan or sob. Her wild eyes were tearless, her white lips were set in a rigid and awful smile.

"I—I feel as if I were going mad!" she murmured.

"You will not go mad," said Craven Black, with an attempt at airiness. "You are not the first woman who has tried to rise above her proper sphere and fallen back to her own detriment. But, Miss Bird, I must have your promise to leave Rufus alone. You must resume your maiden name, and let this episode be as if it had not been."

"I shall not trouble Rufus," the poor girl said, her voice quivering. "If I am not his wife, and he cannot marry me, why should I?"

"That is right and sensible. Here are fifty pounds, which may prove serviceable if you should ever marry."

And Mr. Black handed her a crisp, new Bank of England note.

The girl crumpled it in her hand and flung it back to him, her eyes flashing.

"You have taken away my husband—my love—my good name!" she panted. "How dare you offer me money? I will not take it, if I starve."

Mr. Black coolly picked up the note and restored it to his pocket.

He was about to speak farther when the door was burst violently open, and the landlady, flushed with excitement, came rushing in like an incarnate tornado. The rejection of the money by Lally had incensed her beyond all that had gone before.

"I keep a respectable house, I hope, miss," snapped the woman. "I've heard all that's been said here, as is right I should, being a lone widow and dependent upon the reputation of my lodging-house for a living. And being as you ain't married, though a pretending of it, I can't shelter you no longer. Out you go, without a minute's warning. There's your hat, and there's your shawl. Take 'em, and start!"

Lally obeyed the words literally. She caught up her out-door apparel, and with one wild, wailing cry dashed out of the room, down the stairs, and into the street.

Mr. Black and the landlady regarded each other in a mutual alarm.

"You have driven her to her death, madam," said Craven Black, excitedly. "She has gone out to destroy herself, and you have murdered her."

He put on his hat and left the house. The girl's flying figure had already disappeared, and the villain's conscience cried out to him that she would perish, and that it was he, and none other, who had killed her.

(To be continued.)

FOURTEEN young Chinese, belonging to the noblest families of the Celestial Empire, have just arrived in Paris from Canton, sent by the Emperor to be instructed at the expense of the State. They are to be distributed between the Colleges Saint-Louis and Louis-le-Grand. Every year fourteen young men are to be sent to France.

A NEW COAL MINE.—A valuable seam of coal has been discovered on the estate of the Duke of Devonshire, by the Wingerworth Colliery Company, while sinking a new shaft near Chesterfield. The sinkers found the bed at a depth of 450 yards from

the surface. The pit, which is the deepest in Derbyshire, will be worked by the above-named company, under the style and title of the Hardwick Colliery Company. The coal in quality and quantity quite fulfils the expectations of the directors. Powerful machinery, constructed on the best principles, and embracing modern improvements, is being laid down for the purpose of working the mine.

BESSY HAY.

THE fragrant wild roses lifted their pink chalices up towards the sunshine and dew of the July heavens; the robins sang uproarious glees in the branches of the old apple orchard; and neither rose nor robin was fairer or sweeter-voiced than Bessy Hay, as she stood among the currant bushes, culling the red-ripe fruit under the shade of a huge old pear-tree, where the stone wall of the garden was draped with the emerald festoons of a wild grape vine, while Paul Estcott stood leaning against the mossy trunk of the pear-tree, twisting a stem of blue-bells in his hand.

"I know I'm poor, Bessy," he said, resuming a conversation which had apparently lapsed into silence for a moment or so; "but I suppose poor people have a right to live and be happy as well as rich ones."

"I suppose so too, Paul."

"And I am sure I am willing to work, if only I could find something to do."

Bessy glanced deprecatingly up at him.

"Mr. Elton wants some one to take the farm and work it—"

"That is mere drudgery, and, besides, the pay would not enable me to marry and support a wife comfortably."

"We could wait, Paul."

"You are very willing," said the young man, bitterly. "I don't believe, Bessy, that you care for me as I do for you."

"Oh, Paul!"

And a pained look came over the fair young face. "Well, then, what do you think of being tutor to Mr. Sinclair's little boys?"

"Thank you; I don't fancy the idea of being told-eater to a pompous aristocrat like Henry Sinclair."

"But, Paul, we can't always do and be what we like in this world," pleaded Bessy, with a troubled look shining in her tender, garnet-brown eyes.

"Easy philosophy for you!"

And the young man flung down his stem of blue-bells.

"I suppose you would like to have me break stones upon the roads. I thought you at least could sympathize with the feelings of a gentleman."

"So I do, Paul; but I believe in the Scripture doctrine of a man's doing with all his might whatever his hands find to do."

"I see how it is," said Paul Estcott, haughtily; "you are weary of our engagement; you want to break the wordy fetters that bind you. Very well; so let it be. You are free!"

And he strode away over the high grass, muttering to himself something about "having suspected how it would turn out, ever since Norton Van Brugh had come down from London to sketch the scenery and turn the heads of all the girls."

Bessy Hay made a step or two to overtake him, but she checked herself in an instant, with a scarlet stain on her cheek and a gathering mist in her eyes.

"He ought to know better," she thought, "and he does. No; I will not follow him. He will come back to me when the momentary pique has worn itself away."

In the meanwhile Paul, vaulting over the low stone wall a few paces below, had very nearly stumbled over the prostrate form of a man lying among the red clover blossoms, in the island of shade cast by an umbrageous tree, and reading.

"Mr. Van Brugh."

The young artist glanced up with a sort of lazy scorn showing under his long dark eye-lashes. Paul bit his lip.

"Engaged in the noble occupation of eavesdropping, eh?" he uttered.

"Come now, Estcott, don't be crusty; I didn't mean to overhear your conversation; but what was a fellow to do? This is the jolliest place on the whole farm, and I wasn't to blame because Miss Hay came out, looking like Hebe's self, to gather red currants, and you followed, like her shadow. Come, let's go down by the trout stream, and talk over matters and things in general. Are you really in earnest about wanting something to do?"

"Of course I am."

"Then suppose you just glance over this letter that I received this morning from my uncle. I've no idea of expatriating myself among the pig-tailed celestials for all the fortunes that ever were made. But for an ambitious man—Read the letter, that's all."

Paul Estcott obeyed, almost dazzled for the moment by the brilliant prospect it seemed to open to him.

"You really give me the privilege of accepting or refusing this situation?" he exclaimed.

"I really do; and, considering that I don't want it myself, it is no very great stretch of generosity on my part. Only, you see, you have to decide at once, and be in London to report yourself at my uncle's counting-house within four-and-twenty hours."

Paul sprang up, flushed and eager.

"I'll do it. I'll show Bessy Hay that I am no do-nothing after all, when a motive really worth my while presents itself. But," glancing at his old-fashioned silver watch, which contrasted so markedly with Mr. Van Brugh's elegant full-jewelled chronometer, "I have no time to lose."

"Not a second."

"But my trunk?"

"You can get what you need in town; my uncle supplies the outfit."

"And Bessy?"

"Write to her to-night; my uncle will forward the letter under cover to me, and I will see that she gets it."

Paul Estcott wrung his companion's hand.

"You are very kind," he said, huskily. "I had almost grown to regard you with distrust."

Van Brugh laughed, showing his dainty, pearl-white teeth under a brown moustache.

"Never judge by appearances," he said. "Take my word for it, Miss Hay will excuse all lack of ceremony when she learns all."

Mr. Van Brugh accompanied Paul to the railway station, and saw him off with a smilingly uttered profusion of good wishes.

"The best friend a fellow ever had!" thought Paul as the train moved off.

But he could not see the sardonic grin into which the curves of the farewell smile altered when the little country station was left once more to silence and loneliness.

"Now," said Morton Van Brugh, "I shall have the field all to myself. Strange how fascinated I have allowed myself to become with a mere country girl! But there certainly is something very winning in her type of beauty."

Bessy Hay never answered Paul Estcott's farewell letter; nor did the latter once suspect that it was because Mr. Van Brugh never had delivered it.

Paul, firing up under the fevered impulse of his old enemy, jealousy, took refuge in silence. Nor did a long epistle from his Aunt Jemima, which contained more news—possible, probable, and impossible—than any government bulletin, serve to cool the flames.

"Folks say," wrote the epistolary spinster, "that Eliza Hay is going to marry the widower, Sinclair, because he's rich. There was a deal of talk about her and that young Van Brugh, but he went away all of a sudden, folks thought it likely with a flea in his ear. Eliza knows pretty well which side her bread is buttered on, and Sinclair can't live long with that cough of his."

It was no wonder then that when pretty Bessy Hay made an excuse to come to Aunt Jemima's and asked wistfully and with a certain quiver in her voice if Paul's letter contained no message for her the elderly gossip-monger answered:

"Dear me, no! You didn't expect to hear, did you?"

Bessy went back home, her little heart as cold as lead in her bosom.

She had refused Norton Van Brugh; she said "No" to Mr. Sinclair, in spite of Aunt Jemima's knowing prognostications; and people began to wonder if pretty Bessy Hay were going to be an old maid after all.

"Why doesn't he write to me, or send me at least a word to show that he has not utterly forgotten me?" thought Bessy.

"Why doesn't she answer my letter?" thought Paul.

So the world wagged on, until Mr. Estcott came home from the far-off flowery land—not indeed with the fortune of which he had dreamed in such sanguine fashion, but with a sufficient competence to live well and comfortably in a place as modest as his native village.

It was a stormy November evening, with threatnings of snow in the chill air, and a low wind stirring the last withered leaves upon the houghs, when he alighted at the station, looking almost into the eyes of Bessy Hay, who had come to the post-office to ask once again for the letter that never came.

How seldom are our visions realized!

Bessy had dreamed a thousand times of meeting Paul Estcott, but never in such a way as this.

"Paul!" she quavered.

"Ah!" said Paul, doffing his stylish fur travelling cap, "I hope you are well!"

For he did not exactly like to call her Mrs. Sinclair as yet.

The red stains of sunset had almost faded out of the sky when he overtook her, about a hundred yards from the station.

His heart smote him when he saw the look of meek endurance in her face.

"Are you alone, Bessy?"

"Yes, Paul."

"I suppose," he said, with an effort, "that I must call you by some new name now?"

"Call me Bessy Hay," she answered, quietly.

"You are not married?"

"No, Paul!"

He drew a long breath that was almost like a sob.

"Aunt Jemima said—But, Bessy, why did you not answer my letter?"

"Why did you not write to me, Paul?"

Before they had reached the old Hay farm, where the currant bushes had long since lost their leaves, and the garden-wall was already beginning to be whitened with the falling snow-flakes, the mists of doubt and misunderstanding were all cleared up, and Bessy Hay had promised to forgive and forget all her lover's seeming neglect.

"Van Brugh was a scoundrel," uttered Paul, "but without his aid I could scarcely have been in a position to marry you! It has been a long time to wait; but it is all right, Bessy, after all."

"It's like a story, Paul," said Bessy, "where people go through all sorts of trials and tribulations, but are happy at the last! Oh, Paul, I never thought I should live a story!" A. H.

THE OFFENDED DANDY.

I had a quiet laugh in the park the other day. Not far from where I was loitering a gentleman was promenading, accompanied by a magnificent greyhound, while just in advance of him walked a well-known dandy. The gentleman called: "Bruno! Bruno!" The dandy stopped and looked around, but not knowing the gentleman quickly resumed his walk. Again the gentleman called: "Here, Bruno—come here!" Upon this the dandy turned, and angrily demanded:

"What is your pleasure, sir?"

"With you—nothing."

"Then how dare you, not knowing me, thus familiarly address me on a public promenade?"

"Pray, sir—if I may ask—what is your name?"

"How, sir? Do you wish to insult me?"

"But, will you please give me your name?" quietly pleaded the owner of the greyhound.

"There is my card, sir."

And the dandy handed forth a slip of paste-board.

"Why," said the gentleman, reading aloud the letters upon the card, "this is B-r-u-n-o-o. You need borrow no farther trouble, sir. My dog spells his name without the w!" S. C., JR.

THE Queen has forwarded 50*l.* towards the New Wesleyan Sabbath Schools at Newport, Isle of Wight. This is believed to be the first donation Her Majesty has given towards a Wesleyan object.

It is believed in Rome that Government will issue almost immediately another 300 millions of paper money. Paper money is found to be very convenient to the public, and doubtless to the makers.

A PARIS street scene: "Dear lady," said a child exposing a toy for sale, "buy this." "What is its price?" "Judge yourself, madame; I have eaten nothing to-day." This is dramatic enough to make the fortune of three English dramas of the present day.

THE COUNTERS OF DERWENTWATER.—It is said somewhat authoritatively that there is imminent another *cause célèbre* which may possibly go near to rival the Tichborne case in interest and duration, for the lady who made herself so notorious as claiming the forfeited estates of the Earl of Derwentwater, who was executed and attained for joining in the first expedition to England of the Pretender, has it is said not only certified her pedigree, but has obtained pecuniary means to carry on actions of ejectment to establish her claim. As a great part of the estates were long ago assigned to Greenwich Hospital the Government will be the defendants.

TENACITY OF LIFE IN A CAT.—A gentleman residing in the New Town of Edinburgh informs us that he had occasion to have the drains of his house overhauled, and for this purpose the flooring of a room in the basement story had to be lifted. The work was finished, when the flooring was replaced. It appears, however, that a strange cat which had got access to the room had concealed itself under the partly removed flooring, and been unintentionally shut up by the workmen. The servants of the house had their attention attracted by the moving of a cat, and the sounds were ultimately traced to the flooring. On lifting the deals the poor animal was extricated in a rather exhausted state, but it soon recovered. It had been shut up without food or water for seventeen days.



[THE VALENTINE'S ARRIVAL.]

AUNT HETTY'S VALENTINE.

It was a cheerless, rainy morning in an old-fashioned country house. Cora Marvin and her school friend, Lou Mahory, out of town for a month's visit, sat disconsolately by the fire with nothing to do. The time that had gone by had been so full of excitement that to pass a day quietly by the fire seemed endurable to them.

Suddenly Lou sprang to her feet, upsetting her chair and the cat, and commenced clapping her hands.

"What is the matter now?" said Aunt Hetty, startled by this new move.

"Why, we forgot all about Valentine's Day. We can have lots of fun out of that."

"To be sure! Did you ever send any valentines, auntie?"

"Not many, Cora. But I used to receive a great many. We used to have a great deal of sport over them at school. The boys would put them in our desks at recess, and it did not take us very long to find out who the sender was. There were not as many comic ones sent in those days."

"But more that meant something," said Lou, quickly.

Aunt Hetty laughed and replied:

"Yes, some of them meant a great deal."

"I wish you had saved some to show us," said Cora.

"You go upstairs and look in the old writing-desk in the hall. I shouldn't wonder if you found some in that box in the corner next to the window. I thought of burning them the last time I cleaned house, but must have forgotten it, for I saw them there the other day."

It is doubtful whether the girls heard her last words. They both started as soon as she spoke, and were soon in front of the old desk searching for the valentines. When the box was found they tumbled them out upon the floor, and seated themselves to examine them at their leisure.

"What horrid writing," whispered Lou, looking first to see if the door in the hall below was closed.

"A proposal, as I live," giggled Cora. "Some love-stricken schoolboy."

There were hearts and Cupids in abundance. Some were very handsome, in spite of their age; others quite ridiculous. Aunt Hetty smiled to hear the merry peals of laughter that came down the old stairs, and made the house ring, as the girls came across some that were unusually funny.

"I am glad I kept them, if they will amuse the girls," she thought.

Her work fell from her lap, and the dark eyes dreamily gazed into the fire. Gay, cheerful Aunt Hetty was gone, and in her stead a lonely, sad-hearted woman mused over the past. It must have been the sound of that girlish laughter that made her forget the present and let her mind wander back to the time when she was young and happy.

Not that she was not happy now, but it was a happiness that was calm and quiet, that sprang from feeling that a duty was being performed—not the happiness she once dreamed might be hers. Soon the sound of gay laughter ceased. All was quiet above. Were the girls so soon tired of this new amusement, she wondered? Let us go back and see.

There they were still seated on the floor, half covered with papers of all sorts; their faces quite sober, but full of excitement.

"What shall we do?" whispered Cora.

"Take it down and tell her how we found it."

"I don't like to. Perhaps she has already seen it, and we have had our trouble for nothing."

"I tell you I am the first person who ever took that out after it was put in by the writer," said Lou, decidedly.

"It's a pretty valentine at any rate. But what a queer one, made to open in that way. How did you come to think that little mirror was a door?"

"Because I saw one like it once. But I never

thought this was a love letter, or I wouldn't have broken the seal."

"Did you break the seal, Lou? Then, of course, Aunt Hetty never saw it. What shall we do?" groaned Cora.

"There is no use groaning. Of course, I'm sorry we read it. But I'm not a bit sorry we found it. It's the most romantic thing I ever heard about. To think of this little mirror hiding that letter all these fifteen years. I verily believe I have found out the reason she never married."

"He loved her devotedly, didn't he?" said Cora, looking down at the letter, written in a firm, round hand, commencing: "My dear Hetty," and signed, "Herbert Stacy."

"Yes, he must have loved her. But he was foolish to suppose she would ever find this letter."

"I don't know. It does look like a door, after all."

"Come on. I want to see how she will look when she reads it."

Aunt Hetty looked up with a smile as the girls entered.

"You found some funny things up there, I should judge, from the amount of laughing I heard."

"Yes," said Lou, advancing quite timidly for her; "and we found this," holding out the letter. "It was at the back of the little mirror in that hand-somest one. We read it before we knew what it was."

Aunt Hetty took the letter and glanced at it carelessly, but turned deadly pale as she read.

The girls, frightened at the effect the letter produced, stole quietly from the room, so as not to disturb her.

No need of that. She had forgotten their presence. All her thoughts were fastened upon that faded letter before her—yellow with age and wet by her fast-falling tears.

The fun was all over for the girls, and they went sorrowfully back to the desk and put away the papers they had scattered, feeling that they were in some way to blame for Aunt Hetty's trouble.

Many years before the time of which I have written the village school of Shelby had for its teacher a young man whose energy and perseverance in the task of self-education had rendered him conspicuously qualified for his position. It was no wonder that he was a favourite. He was a gentleman of culture and refinement, and although he had been used to associating with people who were better educated than the simple country folks at Shelby he adapted himself to their customs and won all their hearts by his cordial manner.

That among the many young girls of the place he preferred the society of pretty Hetty Marvin was plainly seen by all, but little wondered at, for Hetty was considered the smartest girl in the place. But it was hard to tell from the gay girl's manner how she regarded the handsome schoolmaster who followed her every movement with adoring eyes.

Pretty girls do not always wear their hearts on their sleeves, and Hetty was not easy to read.

At last he left—never to return, as he told many of his friends with a look of pain in his eyes.

Time passed on, and Hetty still laughed and flirted. Whether she jilted Herbert Stacy, or whether the gossips were mistaken, was never known.

The years rolled by, and changed the gay, thoughtless girl into a thoughtful, self-reliant woman.

The death of her parents left her alone at the homestead. And six months before this story opens one of her brothers sent her his only daughter. The girl was motherless, and needed the kind care she could give her.

So her life was filled. She had been quite contented if not quite happy always.

Loving Herbert Stacy with her whole heart when he left her as he did without a word, she preferred living her life alone to marrying when her heart had been given to another. The most bitter thing to bear was the thought that would sometimes intrude itself into her mind that he was unworthy of the affection she had given him, seeking her love as he had, and then leaving her.

Think what her thoughts must have been on that dreary February morning as she sat with his letter in her hand—the letter that told her what all these long, weary years she had yearned to hear. He had loved her. What mattered it if she found it out too late? The thought would brighten her future life, would make it so different from the past. Where was he now? Married doubtless, and happy in some distant place. Fifteen years change people so. Dead perhaps. What mattered it? He had loved her. Thank Heaven for that!

Aunt Hetty did not appear at dinner time, and the girls stayed upstairs very quietly all the afternoon. They were quite surprised at tea-time to see her as cheerful and bright as ever. They had ex-

pected something very different. How little they understood her. Seeing the girls felt concerned, she said:

"You read the letter, girls?"

"Yes, auntie, we did not know—"

"Never mind. I am glad you found it."

"Where is he now?" Cora ventured to say.

"I don't know, Cora. We will not talk about it any more."

That night, after the rest of the household were quiet, there was a whispered consultation in the girls' room that lasted for some time. And if one could judge from the low, eager tones it would seem that a very important subject was being discussed.

The next morning the two girls departed from the village at an early hour, looking so mysterious that Hannah, as she watched them down the lane, muttered to herself:

"There is mischief afoot, I'll warrant."

They returned after a few hours, and went immediately to their room, where, after the door was bolted, Lou went through a series of antics that would have been quite astonishing to a beholder who did not know the state of her mind.

"I can't help it, Cora," she said, after she had danced all over the bed and upset all the chairs. "I must give vent to my feelings some way, or I shall burst. It's so splendid to think we found out so nicely where he was. I thought I should die when you questioned old Mr. Dean in that careless way."

"Do you think he mistrusted?" said Cora, quite alarmed.

"Of course not. You looked as innocent as a lamb. If it had been one of the gossiping old ladies that abound in this neighbourhood they might have suspected something. I daresay the old gentleman had forgotten all about it. He thought as wonderfully interested in that school. I hope I haven't lost the prospectus he gave me. No; here it is."

And out of Cora's pocket came the article desired, on which they found the words that had so delighted them:

"Professor of languages, Herbert F. Stacy."

Now for the letter. After much laughing and whispering the following epistle was produced—composed by both, but copied and signed by Cora:

"Shelby, February 8th.

"Dear Sir,—Pardon me for taking this liberty. I have something to tell you that I think you would like to hear."

"You perhaps remember sending a valentine many years ago to Miss Hetty Marvin, which contained a letter."

"That letter was discovered for the first time yesterday."

"She was very much affected when she read it, and I think has remained single all these years for your sake."

"I think if you would send her another valentine this year it would meet with better success. Her niece,

CORA MARVIN.

"P.S.—I forgot to say that Aunt Hetty does not know that I am writing this."

"There," said Lou, with a sigh of relief, "the thing is done."

"It sounds first rate," said Cora, reading it over with a decided relish. "Now for the directions. I want to get it off my hands as soon as possible, for fear I shall relent and tear it up. I am awfully afraid, Lou, that we shall get ourselves into a mess over this."

"Who cares? I, for one, like a mess for once in a while."

In the afternoon there was another hasty trip to the village, and the letter was safely deposited in the post-office.

After that there was a lull in their excitement. Cora evidently repented having meddled with the affair at all, and it tasked Lou's ingenuity to the utmost to keep her from confessing the whole thing to Aunt Hetty, who wondered what made her gay little niece so low spirited.

"You will spoil the whole thing if you do," scolded Lou.

"I don't care," sobbed Cora. "I just happened to think this morning that perhaps he is married. Wouldn't it be dreadful?"

Lou dropped on the carpet quite speechless for once, but soon broke out into such a hearty laugh that Cora was forced to join, while the tears were yet on her cheeks.

"I don't know what you see in it to laugh at," she said, at length.

"I am laughing to think what a nice mess we have made if he is married. Wouldn't he and his wife have a jolly quarrel if she should get hold of that letter of yours?"

"I wish I never had written it."

"Pshaw! It's no use to fret about it now. Let's go this afternoon and see if we do not get an answer. He may write."

Aunt Hetty made no objections when the girls proposed a walk that afternoon. She thought the fresh air might do Cora good. She had been feeling so bad. This touched the child's heart so that she

would have then and there made a full confession of her secret if Lou had not raised her eyebrows in such an alarming manner that she was frightened into keeping quiet.

Yes, there was a letter for "Miss Cora Marvin," and as soon as they had got far enough out of the village not to be observed they opened it and read as follows:

"Miss CORA,—You did not need to apologize for writing to me. You have done me a kindness I can never repay."

"I will bring your aunt's valentine this year in person. Do not mention it to her, as I wish it to be a surprise. Very truly yours,

"HERBERT F. STACY."

"February 10th, 1871."

"Short and sweet," pouted Cora. "I think he might have told me all about it. I am glad he is coming, though. What will Aunt Hetty say?"

They came into the house glowing with the exercise in the clear, cold air, and brimming over with the importance of their secret. Four more days. Could they possibly wait that long time without betraying it?

They came very near forgetting the other missives they were to send, thinking of the surprise that was coming.

The four days soon passed, although they seemed to drag as days never dragged before.

St. Valentine's Day dawned bright and clear. The girls were up earlier than usual, and fluttered about the house all the morning in such an excited manner that even Aunt Hetty began to suspect that something was going to happen. After dinner Lou coaxed her to let her do her hair up in a more stylish way, and cautiously slipped a rose from the flower-pot that stood in the window, and twined it among the braids.

They were all quietly sewing when the train came in, about three o'clock in the afternoon; and, as the whistle was heard, the girls trembled with excitement.

By-and-bye a quick, firm tread was heard on the walk outside, a step on the porch, and the old knocker came down with a clang.

Cora tried to rise, but her limbs were so weak that it seemed impossible.

It was Lou who flung open the door and ushered in the tall, handsome gentleman, who caught Aunt Hetty in his arms as she came forward to meet him.

It was Lou who dragged Cora out of the room into the hall, where they both sat down on the oil-cloth and cried till they were summoned back to the sitting-room.

I am afraid it would have been some time before the summons came if Cora had not sobbed so loudly that the lovers heard her. When they came into the room it was with red eyes and faltering steps; but the warm welcome they received brought smiles and banished the tears.

Aunt Hetty had learned their part of the story, but in her happiness could not chide them for the trick they had played her, since it had brought her her valentine. J. E.

GRAY SEALS.—A fine young pair of the gray seal (*Halicherus grypus*) has just been added to the Zoological Society's living collection. This species, although not uncommon on some parts of the British coast, has never previously been received alive by the society. The present specimens were obtained near St. David's, in South Wales, where this seal is said to be of not unfrequent occurrence. Besides this seal the society's collection also contains examples of three other Phocidae—namely, the sealion (*Otaria jubata*), the Cape eared seal (*Otaria pusilla*), and the common seal (*Phoca vitulina*).

DRESS IN THE ARMY.—Under date February 2, the Commander-in-Chief has issued a general order, containing the following regulations regarding the dress of sub-lieutenants:—Cavalry: 1. The tunic, stable jacket, pantaloons, and overalls to be of the pattern worn by other officers, but without lace or braid, except in the Hussars, the sub-lieutenants of which will wear the tunic braided as for staff sergeants. The stripes on the pantaloons and overalls to be of cloth. 2. Sub-lieutenants will not be required to provide themselves with blue frock-coats, dress belts, pouches, sword-knots, or sabretaches. Infantry: 3. Tunics, patrol, and mess jackets are to be the same as worn by officers, but without lace or braid. 4. The dress-trousers, belts, and sashes are not to be worn by sub-lieutenants. 5. In other respects the dress of sub-lieutenants, both of cavalry and infantry, is to be the same as for officers generally.

NATURAL CURIOSITY.—A natural curiosity was recently found by some Broadstairs boatmen at the back of the Goodwin Sands, and was brought by the finders on shore at Broadstairs. It consists of two pieces of wreck, logs of wood some 12 or 14 feet long, and more completely covered with living

barnacles than any piece of wreck ever before seen by the oldest sailor on the coast. The owners exhibit their findings on the pier, and much interest is excited when the logs with their living burden are fed. The feeding consists of their being dipped in the sea off the jetty at high tide. The boatmen have placed themselves in communication both with Mr. Buckland and the Crystal Palace authorities, and they say that it has been arranged that the Crystal Palace Company will take the curiosities, and that a trough is being constructed for their safe conveyance. The barnacles are the common "Pentalamis anatifera," from which, as Dr. Harvey says, "our ancestors believed that barnacle geese were sprung."

DAY DREAMS.

THERE are days when, for some unaccountable reason, I cannot place my mind upon the usual routine of duties; and how many will own to a similar experience?

Whatever the hands perform is done mechanically, and accomplished in a very unpraiseworthy manner; and while the feet plod about among the rubbish, more or less of which crowds the pathway of every human being, the mind, following in the wake of idealistic dreams and fancies, floats upward in a kind of golden mist, and revels in the clouds.

No definite thoughts, no recognized desires, no melody ever set to words, wait upon such moods; the dissonant sounds of life beneath us, the haste and din and disturbances ever attending upon the movements of restless, striving humanity, come to our unheeding ears, mellowed by dim distance, and looked upon through cloud-folds of summer brightness disturb us not; the soul is soothed and intoxicated with nectarean wice, pressed to the willing lips by an unseen sprite, whose charmed retreat, perchance, is hallowed by the music of the spheres; and we almost hear echoes of the harp-strings fanned by airs of the far-away Eden land.

Try as best we may to clasp a check-rein upon Imagination, and bridle her down to common soil, she laughs in the face of our most earnest efforts, and carries us captive to the undefined, indescribable beauty of Armidian realms, "whose enchantments arise amid solitude, and whose solitude is everywhere among those enchantments." Here are fay-haunted bowers, whose soft green sward gives back no sound; here we may bathe our brows in the fabled waters of the Helicon spring, and the talismanic touch banishes all trace of care and perplexity, and we are always young and fair. Plumy foliage nods gently in aromatic breezes, beckoning way-worn pilgrims thither from the low, sultry vale of monotony and discontent.

Rest thee in peace, whispers our guiding spirit; rest. True enough, the ethereal atmosphere will grow gray and murky, and cruel winds of reality rush up the bloom-crowned heights of our shadow land. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the lofty turrets of our castles fade away, growing dim and dimmer in the changing light; and we clatter down the winding stairs, down, down the fair illusive hill-slopes, feeling that the little chink through which we saw the glory, and listened for heavenly strains and the whirring of white wings, is suddenly stopped; and the jar with which we reach earth fully awakes us, and here we are, in the same old world, to be sure, where duties stand in a row like children in a spelling-class, each one leaving its place at the head to reappear in regular order. But we are refreshed and invigorated by the little flight our restless souls have accomplished, extending, maybe, to the utmost limit of the hindering chain which sometimes tugs at its fastenings inside its clay-bound walls.

Many sober-minded, even-tempered persons condemn the practice of indulging in these extravagant aerial ascensions.

What do they know of the glories of Spanish castles away up in the empyrean, peopled with forms fairer and dearer than are ever seen in common nighttime dreams?

Rather do we pity those who, when the world grows dark and forbidding at every turn, cannot turn aside their eyes from the wearisome panorama and seek a country of their own creation and liking, whence no sneer of foe or false smile of changeable friend can follow.

Some one has said: "Were the sensibilities of many natures any more refined they could never endure the pleasures and pains of this present everyday world." Ah, it is this occasional impromptu pilgrimage to an imaginary clime, and now and then a sail on the sunlit bay, whose silver-edge waves lap the foundation walls of our Castle of Indolence—these beatific intervals it is which save such suffering souls from loathing this really beautiful world.

Prison bars cannot confine a truly poetical imagination. This one celestial gift hath the All Wise placed beyond earthly reach.

It is a significant thought that the sensitive soul,

which is wounded most deeply by the jars and inequalities of this strange life, is fitted to enjoy a fuller measure of exquisite bliss in the life to come.

M. E.

VOLCANIC MOUNTAINS.

From testimony and from observation we have evidence of the fact that, within the period of authentic history, the surface of the earth has undergone alteration, and is at present subject to a process of constant change. Combining all we know of its rocky structure, from the top of the highest mountain to the bottom of the deepest mine, it forms but an insignificant film of the four thousand miles which lie between the surface and the centre of the globe.

This film or outer portion is spoken of as the "crust of the globe," in contradistinction to the interior portions, of which we know nothing but by direct observation. This as this crust may appear, it is, nevertheless, the theatre of extensive, diversified, and ceaseless changes. Every change arising from the violence of the earthquake and volcano, every modification resulting from the waters, is of course on the surface. We may also refer here to the wearing influence of the atmosphere and the rains, in breeze, or gale, or storm, to the abrading and transporting power of streams and rivers, augmented by casual or periodical floods, to the action of the waves, tides, and currents of the ocean upon the coasts, to the agency of excessive temperature, and to sudden changes of temperature, and to the violent forces exerted in earthquakes and volcanic explosions. One of the largest and most perfect of the volcanic cones in the world is that of the Peak of Teneriffe. It conveys a good idea of the general form of the cone, and has long been a conspicuous and useful landmark to mariners. It is upwards of twelve thousand feet in height, and is said to be visible in very clear weather to the distance of 100 miles.

The most interesting products of an active volcano are the streams of lava which it pours forth—sometimes from the principal crater on the summit, and sometimes from the smaller craters lower down. This lava consists of a molten mass when it issues from the mountain; the streams spread themselves several miles, with a depth of several hundred feet, and they sometimes flow on till they reach fifty miles. Speaking of Teneriffe, the crater at the top is comparatively small, its greatest breadth is 300 feet and least 200, while its depth is only 100 feet. From this crater there has been no eruption since 1706, when the finest harbour in the island was destroyed. But from the side of the peak there rises a supplementary mountain, named Chahorra, on the top of which there is also a crater, whence there was an eruption in 1798. So great was its violence that masses of rock were thrown to a height of 3,000 feet and upwards. In the neighbouring island of Palma there is a volcanic crater named the Great Caldera, whose depth is said to be upwards of 5,000 feet. Almost due east of Palma, and much nearer to the African coast, lies the island of Lancerote, on which are a great many volcanic cones, arranged nearly in a straight line. These were for the most part formed by a long series of eruptions, which took place during the years 1730 to 1736. Such immense quantities of lava were poured forth in the course of six years that about one-third of this island was covered, and many towns and excellent buildings destroyed.

Lava, not being so liquid as water, does not flow so rapidly; nevertheless, when it is careering down the sides of the mountain, or where the slope of the ground is considerable, it advances with great speed. Even when at its hottest it is sometimes viscid, like treacle, and this viscidness increases as it cools. Hence on a level plain, and at some distance from its source, the lava stream advances at a leisurely pace. Nothing can resist the progress of the lava flood; trees, houses, everything yields to its massive assault. The trees even take fire before its approach, and when it reaches them they emit a hissing noise, almost amounting to a shriek, and then, plunged into the molten flood, are seen no more. Even the sea cannot withstand the lava-stream, but retires on its approach, so that promontories stretching to a considerable distance from the shore are formed in this manner, when the molten mass hardens into a stone.

The eruptions of lava are sometimes attended by peculiarities which impart to them much additional grandeur. St. Catalina, a populous town, was overflowed by lava, and, strange to say, a new crater burst forth on its very site, raising a hill not less than 400 feet. The volcanic activity of this island was renewed in August, 1824, and formed near the port of Rescif a new crater, which sent forth such quantities of stones and ashes, and other volcanic particles, as to raise a hill of considerable height in 24 hours. The Cape de Verde islands, to the southwest of the Canaries, are also volcanic; in 1847 a volcano named Tuego, situated in one of them, af-

ter remaining at rest about fifty years, burst into fresh activity, and no less than seven new vents were formed, and from these vents were poured forth great streams of lava, which did immense damage to the cultivated parts of the island, the inhabitants sustaining losses with their cattle, crops, &c.

Passing over to South America, we come to the range of the Andes, which contains numerous volcanoes. Among these the most conspicuous is Cotopaxi, the highest volcano in the world, measuring 18,873 feet high, situate in the territory of Quito; its summit is much broader than the Peak of Teneriffe. The volume of smoke is also greater; so perfect is the form of this cone that it looks as if it had been chiselled. Its coating of snow gives it a dazzling appearance, and so sharply is the snow-line defined that it seems almost as if the Volcano King wore a nightcap instead of a crown. The eruptions of this mountain are rare. One of the greatest of them lasted for three years, and destroyed an immense extent of country with floods of lava. On this occasion columns of fire rose to the height of nearly 5,000 feet, so great was the energy of the volcanic force. A little to the southward of Cotopaxi, but concealed from it by the intervening mass of Chimborazo, lies the volcano of Tunguragua, from which there was an extraordinary eruption in the year 1797. So terrible was the convulsion of the ground, which lasted four minutes, that the cities of Riobamba and Quero were reduced to a heap of ruins. The base of Tunguragua was rent, and from numerous apertures there were poured out streams of water and mud, the latter gathering into valleys 600 feet deep. This mud spread itself far and wide, blocking up the channels of rivers, and forming lakes, which remained upwards of two months. But, strangest of all, quantities of dead fish were found in the water which issued from the volcano.

Quito, the highest of all cities, 9,506 feet above sea level, is built on a plain, lying on the flanks of the volcano Pichinca. On March 22nd, 1859, Quito suffered severely from this dangerous position; a violent shake of the mountain laid the whole city in ruin. Pichinca, instead of a single cone, like that of Cotopaxi, has a group of cones, some of which are very pointed. The celebrated traveller, Baron Humboldt, nearly lost his life on this range; it has a crater, and within it is a body of glowing lava.

There are in this region of South America two other great volcanoes, named Antisana and Sangay. The former has not been in action since 1718, but it is remarkable for the immense beds of lava, which have massed around it during its former eruptions. Sangay, again, has ever since 1728 been in a state of almost perpetual activity. The eruptions of Sangay are accompanied by loud explosions, which are heard at great distances; its summit is 18,000 feet above sea level. Another in Chili, named Chillan, which had long been in a state of repose, renewed its activity in November, 1864; streams of lava were thrown out on this occasion, and its appearance is greatly altered.

LONGEVITY.

PARENTS have for a good many centuries been disgusted when their sons have plunged into metre instead of taking to the counting-house; but they have never, we suspect, made full use of the argument from the deleterious influence of the pursuit upon human life. Poetry, we should be inclined to say, from a cursory inspection of the most accessible facts, is almost as destructive as those trades which are proposed to be the subjects of Parliamentary interference. It is as bad as razor-grinding.

Looking through any list of English poets, the number of early deaths is startling. Burns, and Byron, and Shelley, and Keats, and Chatterton will occur at once. To the list of those who died before fifty we may add Spenser, Thomson, Collins, Goldsmith. Shakespeare managed just to get beyond his fiftieth year, and Pope and Gray got halfway from fifty to sixty; but an aged poet is an exception of the proverbial kind. Milton lived to a respectable age; but then he long refrained from indulgence in this dangerous practice in favour of the superior (we speak from a sanitary point of view) pursuit of political life. He did not long survive the requiem to his earlier pursuits. Cowper lived to near seventy; but it drove him mad. Dryden reached the same age without the same penalty; and Wordsworth, by dint of a regular country life, survived all his contemporaries, and attained the respectable age of eighty. The only wonder in the last case is that a man of so sound a constitution, and placed under such favourable circumstances, did not live to confute Sir G. Cornewall Lewis; he really came of premature death, and we suspect that the "Ode on the Intimations of Mortality" took ten years out of his life, while his other inspired moments may account for the remaining period. Besides which, two years in the Lakes cannot be counted for more than one in London. Dryden alone remains to confront us; and it must be confessed that Dryden's poetry comes very close to the borders of prose.

By way of contrast, let us suggest the names of a few speculative philosophers amongst English writers of reputation. We find that Bacon and Hume lived to be 65; Berkeley to be 69; Locke 72; Reid 86; and Hobbes 91. Amongst the German metaphysicians, Kant died at 80, and Schelling at 79, whilst Hegel was prematurely cut off at 62. In France, Melebranche lived, in spite of a delicate constitution, to be 87, and then had to be killed by an encounter with his brother metaphysician, Berkeley. Descartes, it is true, died at about the age of Shakespeare; but Descartes was naturally delicate, whereas we can hardly doubt that Shakespeare had a fine constitution. If they had exchanged pursuits no one can say that Shakespeare might not have rivalled Hobbes, and Descartes perished as early as Keats. Spinoza, again, died at 44; but De Quincey very properly argues from this and other circumstances that he must have been murdered. Let us hope for the credit of philosophy that such was the case. At any rate, though the shortest-lived of metaphysicians, he would have had a very fair tenure of life for a poet.

We have not indulged in any profound researches, but we have had the curiosity to determine the average age of the English poets contained in a short list at the end of the *Golden Treasury*. The result comes out precisely 56, which, according to our German authority, is just that of the most unhealthy of all professions. The average, however, is materially increased by the admission of such unreasonably long-lived people as Rogers and Mrs. Barbauld, and other minor poets. A still shorter list of metaphysicians gives an average of 68 years, or a length of life superior even to that of the clergy; but we admit that it would be desirable to base any decided theory on a wider collection of facts.

FACETIÆ.

THE difference between a carriage horse and a carriage wheel is this—one goes best when it's "tired" and the other doesn't.

AN old bachelor, who bears his lonely state with much equanimity, says: "It is better to be laughed at for not being married than to be unable to laugh because you are."

A YOUNG lady who had many admirers among the limbs of the law, on being asked how she escaped heart-whole, supposed it was owing to the fact that "in a multitude of 'counselors' there is safety."

A WOMAN lately looking at a printing-press at work looked up in the face of her companion, and in a most earnest manner inquired, "Arrah, Tim, an' them's the things as writes the papers? Be's them what they call editors?"

THE COUNTER AND THE BAR.—The publicans have for some time taken to sell tea, on the plea of "Defence, not Defiance." There is another article of grocery which Bang might also vend, and that appropriately—Tap-ice.—Punch.

AN AGGRAVATED CASE.

Head Keeper (to Under Ditto): "What d'yer want to be walking on the line for? Why, that there train might 'a' smashed yer to bits! And master's gun in yer hand too!"—Punch.

AN EAST RIDDLE.—What parliamentary elections are those which are always conducted apart from the public-house? The elections for the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and the election of the Speaker.—Punch.

"I WILL bet you a bottle of wine that you will descend from that chair before I ask you twice." "Done," said the gentleman, who seemed determined not to obey the summons so obediently. "Come down!" "I will not!" Then stop till I tell you a second time.

EXPERIENCE TEACHES.

"Bill," said Bob, "why is that tree called the weeping willow?"

"Cause one of the sneaking, plaguey things grow near the school-house and supplied the master with switches."

THE GLASS.—"A woman's greatest enemy is the looking-glass," said a husband to his wife, who was admiring herself in a mirror while he was sipping his wine. "That may be," she retorted, "but it does not cause her and her children half so much woe as her husband's wine-glass does."

PRACTICAL.

Hopeful: "Will breakfast soon be ready, mamma?"

Mamma: "Yes, my dear."

Hopeful: "Well, papa, you might say grace just now to save time."—Punch.

CHOICE OF EVILS.—Which is the worst for the master?—To submit to Mrs. Magpie's pony constantly kicking the best hounds, her daughters' noisy chatter while they are drawing the woods, and her boy's perpetual heading of foxes;—or to affront Old Magpie, whose coverts are well pre-

served, who pays a handsome subscription to the hunt, and invariably gives a breakfast when the hounds are near?—*Punch*.

A CURT BOY.—A father was telling his son, not yet seven years of age, the fable of Pandora's Box. He said that all the evils which afflicted mankind were shut up in that box, which the curiosity of Pandora tempted her to open, when they all flew out and spread over the earth. "That cannot be," said the lad, "since curiosity tempted Pandora to open the box, which being one of the greatest evils of itself, could not have been in it!"

UNLOOKED-FOR APPROBATION.—A demure-looking chap hailed a charcoal peddler with the query, "Have you got charcoal in your waggon?" "Yes, sir," said the expectant driver, stopping his horses. "That's right," observed the demure chap, with an approving nod, "always tell the truth and people will respect you!" And he hurried on, much to the regret of the peddler, who was getting out of the waggon to look for a brick.

"BREAKING THE ICE."
Gentleman (to Pensive Neighbor during the Quarter of an Hour before Dinner): "Miss Wilkin-son, you look sad. Perhaps you're tired?"

Lady: "Oh, no, thank you."
Gentleman: "Or unwell?"
Lady: "Oh, dear, no!"
Gentleman (in desperation): "Then—you must be hungry!"—*Punch*.

WORRYING.—An old lady as far down the decline of life as seventy-nine, like people generally about her age, was constantly worrying about something or other. She lost her spectacles on one occasion. They were replaced by a new pair, out of which one of the glasses soon followed the former missing pair. While the latter was being repaired the other pair was found. Finally both pairs came home, and her indulgent son on the same day presented her with a pair of gold bows. On receiving the whole three pairs of specs in good-looking order, the old lady in a subdued voice exclaimed, with a long-drawn sigh: "Oh, dear, what have I got to worry about now?"

A SIGNAL DEFEAT.—A story is told which may be commended to Parisian gentlemen as containing a valuable hint. Two Englishmen were dining with two ladies at an hotel in Baden Baden. A Russian Prince, who wished to pick a quarrel with them, purchased two bouquets and sent them to the ladies with his compliments. The gentlemen glanced pleasantly at the Russian, and sent him by the waiter who brought the flowers two Napoleons. The offender was, it is added, so chagrined that he left the room. It is thus shown that people who have abandoned duelling may be by no means so defenceless against personal affronts as might be supposed.

FEMININE INGENUITY.
A bashful youth was paying his addresses to a gay lass of the country, who had long despaired of bringing things to a crisis. He called one day when she was alone. After settling the merits of the weather the girl said, looking slyly into his face:

"I dreamed of you last night."
"Did you? why, now?"
"Yes, I dreamed that you kissed me."
"Why, now? What did you dream your mother said?"

"Oh, I dreamed she wasn't at home."
A light dawned on the youth's intellect, a singular sound broke the stillness, and in less than four months they were married.

THE "MISSING" DONKEY.—An eminent judge used to say that, in his opinion, the very best thing ever said by a witness to a counsel was the reply given to Missing, the well-known barrister, at the time the leader of his circuit. He was defending a prisoner charged with stealing a donkey. The prosecutor had left the animal tied up to a gate, and when he returned he was gone. Missing was very severe in his examination of the witness. "Do you mean to say, witness, the donkey was stolen from the gate?" "I mean to say, sir," giving the judge and then the jury a sly look and at the same time pointing to the counsel, "the donkey was Missing."

DISTINGUISHED PUPILS.—There is living at his parsonage, near Colchester, Essex, a clergyman, the Rev. Mr. Cheese, who between forty and fifty years ago had as his pupils at Balliol College two young men named Tait and Manning, the one of whom was destined to become Archbishop of Canterbury, and the other the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster.

NATIONAL FESTIVAL AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE.—The directors of the Crystal Palace Company have fixed the 1st of May for a grand national festival in celebration of the recovery of his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, and have commissioned Mr. Arthur Sullivan to compose a *Te Deum*, for voices

and orchestra, to be performed on the largest scale in the centre transept on that day.

THE UNIVERSITY BOAT RACE.—Should the Oxford and Cambridge race be rowed, according to usage, on the Saturday before Good Friday—viz., on the 28th of March—the public will have an excellent opportunity of seeing the event, as the tide will serve on that day at about one o'clock. Against this the interests of the clergy, who cannot see the race, if rowed on Saturday, and return home to Sunday duty, will doubtless be urged, as it has been on former occasions, and sometimes with success.

A NEW ATLANTIC CABLE.—A new Atlantic Cable is to be laid during the summer of next year, about July, 1873. The promotion of this object is in extremely powerful hands, but it must not be assumed that it is organized as a mere competing undertaking with the present companies. There will be, it is stated, perfect harmony in the working arrangements between the three companies as soon as the new concern is ready for business. There is room for three cables, surely, and more will be wanted as we grow.

THE WIDOW'S LITTLE FRIEND.

It was a dark and stormy night,
And wintry was the weather.
When we—bereft, and sad, and lone—
We two were left together.

Ah! little thought my boy and I—
Pressing a peaceful pillow—
That he, the treasure of our home,
Lay cold beneath the billow.

But one is left—my little son—
With blue eyes grave and tender,
A smile that's sunny as the skies,
And looks of golden splendour.
With wisdom far beyond his years
He frames sweet words of pity,
And sings, to "comfort poor mamma,"
Each day some childish ditty.

We often walk, his hand in mine,
Down by the solemn river:
'Tis then for him, my little friend,
I thank our God, the giver.
He lifts his earnest face to mine,
So full of boyish beauty:
'I'll never, never go to sea;
'Twill not be Jamie's duty.

'I'll stay at home, and care for you,
And never love another;
And work and work," my boy will say,
'When I'm a man, dear mother.
Be this my prayer—that Heaven will have,
In waking and in sleeping,
Through joy or pain, through weal or woe,
My darling in its keeping. M. A. K.

GEMS.

TEMPER is so good a thing that we should never lose it.

THERE is only one love, but there are a hundred imitations.

OVER-WARM friendships, like hot coals, are quickly dropped.

NOTHING is more easy to do than mischief, nothing more difficult to bear without complaining.

MEN generally put a greater value upon the favours they bestow than upon those they receive.

OPINION is the main thing which does good or harm in the world. It is our false opinions of things which ruin us.

FIRMNESS without mildness is harsh and forbidding; mildness without firmness becomes weak and contemptible; both united make a character respectable and amiable.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

REMEDY FOR COUGH.—Take a large teaspoonful of linseed, two pennyworth of stick liquorice, and a quarter of a pound of sun raisins; put these into two quarts of soft water, and let it simmer over a slow fire till it is reduced to one; then add to it a quarter of a pound of brown sugar-candy pounded, a table-spoonful of old rum, and a table-spoonful of the best white wine vinegar, or lemon-juice. The rum and vinegar are best to be added only to the quantity you are going immediately to take, for if it is put into the whole it will grow flat. Drink half a pint at going to bed, and take a little when the cough is troublesome. This recipe generally cures the worst of colds in two or three days.

CHAUCER'S TOMB.—Chaucer's tomb in Westminster Abbey, which was put up to his memory by Nicholas Brigham in 1556, has been lately examined

by Mr. M. H. Bloxham, who is positive that the tomb is neither of Chaucer's date, 1400, nor Brigham's, but is late fifteenth century work, say about 1480. Mr. Bloxham has no doubt that the tomb is a second-hand monument.

STATISTICS.

GROWTH OF GREAT TOWNS IN GERMANY.—The results of the late census, so far as they are already known, seem to point, even more than the preceding ones, to the rapid growth of great towns in Germany. During the War of Liberation, Berlin, which had then 197,000 inhabitants, was the only town in Prussia with a population of more than 100,000. Berlin has now 825,000 inhabitants; and, besides the capital, Prussia has ten cities with a population of 100,000 in round numbers or upwards. They are:—Breslau, 300,000; Elberfeld-Barmen, 160,000; Cologne, 130,000; Königsberg, 112,000; Magdeburg, with its suburbs Neustadt, Sudenburg, and Buckau, 110,000; Hanover, 105,000; Frankfurt-on-Main, with Bockenheim and Bornheim, 104,000; Danzig, 100,000; Stettin, 97,000; and Altona, 95,000. In the rest of Germany there are four cities which have a population exceeding 100,000, viz.:—Hamburg, 240,000; Munich, 190,000; Dresden, 177,000; and Leipzig, 107,000; while four have nearly reached that figure, viz.:—Stuttgart, 92,000; Nuremberg, 87,000; Bremen, 80,000; and Strassburg, 60,000. Besides the above-mentioned cities, Prussia contains 17 towns with more than 30,000 inhabitants, which, according to the new regulations, will therefore each form an independent administrative circle. Among these are Aix-la-Chapelle, 80,000; Düsseldorf, 80,000; Crefeld, 70,000; Essen, 45,000; Duisburg, 30,000; Wiesbaden, 32,000; Cassel, 44,000; Halle, 52,000; Erfurt, 32,000; Posen, 60,000; Elbing, 30,000; Frankfurt-on-Oder, 44,000; Potsdam, 42,000; Dortmund, 44,000; and Götting, 46,000. From the above it appears that Prussia contains 26 cities which enjoy independent administrative rights in the fullest measure, and which together include nearly 3,000,000 inhabitants, or about one-eighth of the entire population of the kingdom.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A NEW WHOLESALE flower market is being erected in Covent Garden. It will be about 200 feet in depth, and its extreme width in the centre will be 160 feet, altogether covering an area of about 3,000 square yards.

A LEARNED Italian, the astronomer Giovanni Castro, announces the end of the world for January 11, 1877. The shock of a comet is, he declares, to annihilate the unfortunate planet. We are first to be suffocated, then burnt.

A SCOTCH lady—Miss Jessie Macgregor—has carried off the highest honour at the Royal Academy this year. The gold medal and books for the best historical painting, "An Act of Mercy," have been accorded to Miss Macgregor, who is the second female recipient of the honour.

THE death is announced at Colchester of a Trafalgar veteran named Isaac Pooley. Pooley, who was eighty-seven years of age when he was removed by death, fought at the battles of Trafalgar and the Nile, and he was on board the "Victory" when Lord Nelson received his mortal wound.

AN ALARMING RUMOUR.—It is reported that the high Spanish oomb is to be brought into fashion again by the ladies, but instead of being made of shell, as in former days, it is to be made of gold and ornamented with precious stones, so that the expense may be unlimited.

A REWARD of 2,000*l.* has been offered in the name of Lady Franklin for the whole of the journals or other records of the expedition of the "Erebus" and "Terror." These records are believed to have been deposited near Point Victory, on King William's Land, by the survivors of the expedition in 1848.

RUMOURS are circulating in Paris that the Government are negotiating with several leading financial firms in Europe for the mortgage to them of the tobacco monopoly, on condition that they guarantee to the Germans the payment of the war indemnity, and obtain the evacuation of the whole of France before the beginning of April.

AMERICAN OYSTERS.—There is some hope that oysters may soon be purchased at a reasonable rate. Very large consignments have already found their way to London from America, and a retail trade has sprung up in most of the English manufacturing towns. In general the American oysters are much larger and fatter than our own. They are right good eating, although not so delicate in flavour as Edd Banks and Natives. They are sold in Liverpool for less than half the price of home-grown oysters. If it were only to gain a respite for our impoverished beds, a heavy importation of these oysters would be invaluable.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS

J. R.—The lines are inadmissible.

STELLA and MILDRED are advised to postpone the subject for a year or two.

FRANKLIN.—You have not stated your views with sufficient precision.

S. H.—The reply to "Robert" having been inserted, the other response is inadmissible.

A. F.—You may be hardly able to form an accurate idea on such a subject; wait for two or three years.

SPANARD.—The works referred to can be procured by order of any respectable bookseller.

M. A. M.—No charge is made for any services we may be able to render our correspondents.

A. YOUNG CARPENTER.—The rhymes are too bad for insertion.

COCOA.—The Christian name of Madame Titiens is "Teresa." The other questions are too personal.

MAUDE G.—If you refer to the previous numbers you will find that your first letter received due attention.

M. A. M.—As long as he is unacquainted with the age, the captain is not in a position to form an opinion.

C. C. C. B.—The monthly parts of THE LONDON READER can be forwarded by post for eightpence each.

FIVE YEARS' SUBSCRIBER.—The words "Admonere et percutio" will probably express your sentiment.

EMMA.—The handwriting certainly requires improvement, which would be effected if you purchased a Darnell's copy-book and wrote two copies a day.

XENOPHON and VITRUVIUS.—No accurate idea of your position, prospects, or appearance can be formed by a perusal of your letter.

B. E.—We have received the pieces "On History" and "The Storm," but do not find them suitable to our columns.

MYRA.—We cannot recommend anything to remove the superfluous hair from your face. The fact that the application of depilatories is dangerous is well known.

ORINUS.—We were amused, because the correspondence brought to our recollection a well-known fact in natural history about the ostrich.

E. S. B.—To learn navigation it is necessary that you should go to sea, having been first bound apprentice to a captain of a merchant or other vessel.

G. F.—A bankrupt cannot recover money due to him at the period of his bankruptcy; the right to such money or property vests in the trustee under the bankruptcy.

JAMES S.—Send in advance one shilling and eightpence in postage stamps to our publisher, which will ensure you a three months' supply, postage free.

M. J. T.—We think that the circumstances warranted the proprietor in prefixing the word "Royal" to his hotel. It was unnecessary for him to ask permission of any one.

HARRY S.—For the present we are afraid you will find it necessary to moderate the somewhat exacting nature of the combined qualifications you expect to find in a wife.

ELLEN S.—You are entitled to redress under certain conditions. The most practical course at your disposal is to state your grievance to the inspector on duty at the police-station nearest your residence.

FLYING ROYAL and FRIEND.—In one case the age is too young, in others the specifications are very indefinite. No useful purpose can be served by any farther attention to the letter.

R. M. D., FRANCIS, and D. P. R. are reminded that young men who have not attained the age of twenty-one years are generally considered ineligible for the married state.

STOCKPORT.—Thanks for your trouble. The advice is excellent, but the manner in which the hints have been joined together somewhat detracts from the value they otherwise would have possessed.

A. C. (Shrewsbury).—The deterioration of the home-made wines arises probably from the use of too much sugar previous to the time of fermentation. This may be counteracted by the admixture of some tannic acid.

ALFRED EVERSHAM W.—Your letter is characterised by so much remoteness that it will fail to make any agreeable impression upon a young lady whose favourable opinion you covet.

WILLIAM (Grantham).—The grease can be removed from either description of garment by the application of spirit of turpentine obtained from a chemist. Rub the turpentine well over the spot, then with a clean brush brush the spot vigorously; to get rid of the odour

of the turpentine hang the garments where there is a brisk current of air.

H. P. (Hamptstead).—The following are the significations usually attached to the Christian names forwarded: Clara, bright; Alice, noble; Henrietta, a lady of competence; Agnes, chaste; Mary, bitter; Lucy, shining; Sarah, a princess; and Elizabeth, the oath of God.

HARRY YERKON.—A man ought certainly not to marry until he attains the age of twenty-one; if, indeed, that is not much too early a period for an undertaking fraught with an importance to which the term immense may without impropriety be applied.

ORADIAN W.—The word *criollo* is derived from the Spanish *criollo*, and now signifies a native of the West Indies descended from European ancestors. The name was originally given to the descendants of the first Spanish settlers in America and the West Indies by native women.

A. D.—Your naive intimation, that music is not necessary but money is, no doubt induces a very practical and business turn of mind. But then such an announcement may be viewed more as a commercial transaction than "an affair of the heart," and of such transactions, when recognized, ladies usually fight shy.

WHITE VIOLET.—Think twice about it, and spare your friends the pain of seeing the light-heartedness depart from sweet seventeen. Remember the lines:

"Not as was once a rose in cheerful light,
Blooming, rejoicing in the morning air,
But like a lonely lily in the night,
Drooping beneath the chilling weight of care."

J. H.—Anchovies are occasionally found on the British coasts, but are more abundant on the shores of Sicily and other parts of the Mediterranean, where they are caught in nets of 10 or 12 feet wide, and very long. During the process of pickling they are boiled, by which means the backbone is dissolved. The curing occupies about a month. They are first thrown into brine, to give the salters time to nip off the heads with the finger and thumb and pack them with alternate layers of salt.

THE NOBLEST PART.

All is not dark! the sky may lower,
The sun refuse to shine,
But dwelling in each mortal hour
Is some good gift divine.

There is no life but hath its woe,
No soul but hath its pain:
Yet pleasures come, while sorrows go,
As sunshine follows rain.

Look where we may, some good we see,
Some joy to conquer ill;
And, though in grief perchance we be,
Hope lingers with us still.

Heaven gave us all that strength which yields
Us fortitude to bear,
And gives us bravery that shields
Our hearts from deep despair.

It placed us here to set our part,
And do the best we can,
And show that goodness of heart
And virtue make the man.

Though trouble come, and ill assail,
He acts the noblest part
Who turns his full face to the gale,
And keeps a steadfast heart.

So let us all, while'er betide,
Like brave men bare the breast,
And, standing fast by virtue's side,
To Heaven leave the rest.

C. D.

A. W. W.—We are afraid you have misinterpreted our last reply. Your former letter was an answer to more than one young lady, and what we meant to say was that as by the law of the land you can only marry one at a time, so we would not encourage you to court more than one at a time. We perfectly understood the "how-happy-could-I-be-with-either" spirit in which your letter was written. It rests, however, with you to decide who is to be the either, and we must still say we cannot help you to such conclusion.

JANE, eighteen, dark hair and eyes, loving, and domesticated. Wishes to marry a young gentleman, steady, tall, and dark.

D. W. J., twenty-one, 5ft. 10in., dark, and a tradesman. Respondent must be tall, light hair, and about eighteen.

CAMILLUS, twenty-five, 5ft. 8in., dark complexion, hair, eyes, and whiskers, in receipt of a good salary. Respondent must be dark and good looking.

HORACK, twenty-four, 5ft. 8in., fair complexion, hair, eyes, and whiskers. Respondent must be a fair young lady about twenty, pleasing and good looking.

TUSIE, twenty-six, would like to marry a respectable young man about her own age. She is fair, with dark eyes, good tempered, and would make a loving wife.

EMMA, eighteen, fair, blue eyes, brown hair. Would like to marry a young man in a respectable position; a tradesman preferred.

AFFECTIONATE LIZZIE, a young widow, twenty-eight, 5ft. 3in., good looking, and loving. Would like to marry a respectable man about thirty-five, who is a carpenter or upholsterer; a widower with children not objected to.

CLARI DALLAS, eighteen, tall, brown hair, hazel eyes, good figure, amiable, and domesticated. Wishes to marry a respectable tradesman not more than thirty, tall, good looking, and fond of home.

MAUD, twenty, tall, fair, pretty, and domesticated. Respondent must be dark, manly, steady, and able to keep a wife. "Maud" will have 500l. when she comes of age.

BESSIE, nineteen, medium height, very fair, good figure, pretty, can sing and dance, and will have money on her wedding-day. Respondent must be tall, dark, and good looking; a clerk preferred.

COOK and HOUSEMAID.—"Cook," twenty-four, medium height, brown hair and eyes. "Housemaid," twenty-

two, medium height, dark hair and eyes, good tempered, and loving. Both would make good wives to respectable, steady young men.

FRASHER, twenty-three, would like to marry a lady about nineteen or twenty. He is of medium height, good looking, loving, fond of home, and musical. Respondent must be good tempered, good looking, loving, and affectionate.

FLORA and EDITH.—"Flora," twenty-two, tall, dark hair, blue eyes, ladylike, would make a good wife. Respondent must be tall, dark, of gentlemanly appearance, with good prospects. "Edith," twenty-one, medium height, graceful, domesticated, and would be true and constant. Respondent must be tall, gentlemanly, well educated, and of a loving disposition.

EVIE, eighteen, dark, stout, musical, accomplished, domesticated, and will have a little money. Respondent must be dark, not bad looking, under thirty, and well educated; a tradesman or clerk with a good salary preferred.

POLLIE and JENNIE.—"Pollie," eighteen, tall, genteel, well educated, fair, amiable disposition. Wishes to marry a young gentleman; tall and dark preferred. "Jennie," twenty-three, medium height, nice figure, even temper, and domesticated. Wishes to marry a young man who will make a kind and loving husband.

PRIMROSE and VIOLET (Dorsetshire).—"Primrose," twenty, medium height, brown hair, hazel eyes, and a farmer's daughter. Respondent must be tall, good tempered, and very respectable. "Violet," eighteen, tall, fair, fond of home, and domesticated. Respondent must be of medium height, kind, respectable, and fond of home.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

JESSIE P. is responded to by—"Amo," who answers her requirements and has a good salary as clerk.

MORSTREON, by—"Emily R.," sensible, affectionate, domesticated, and belongs to the Church of England.

H. D. by—"R. J.," twenty-one, 5ft. 9in., fair, blue eyes, in a good position, and has money.

HENRY HUBERT by—"Helen H.," twenty, 5ft. 2in., dark, loving, and fond of singing.

BOSSIE by—"Eva," eighteen, a fair and very pretty English girl, blue eyes, golden hair, and very loving.

ALICE by—"J. P.," a mechanic, twenty-four, tall, and not bad looking.

GEORGE by—"Bessie R. K. D.," thirty, 5ft., golden hair, blue eyes, well proportioned, fair complexion, well educated, and affectionate.

EDGAR by—"S. H. B.," twenty-five, tall, genteel, blue eyes, very dark hair, good teeth, loving, and good tempered.

LIONEL by—"M. B.," twenty-five, medium height, brown hair, gray eyes, good looking, good tempered, loving, domesticated, and would be a devoted wife.

GERALD by—"Little Emily," medium height, dark brown eyes and hair, musical, and longing for some one to love her.

BLUE-EYED SUSAN by—"Freddy G.," twenty-four, who flatters himself that he is just the chap to suit "Blue-eyed Susan."

MAGGIE by—"Charles B.," twenty-seven, 5ft. 11in., fair, light hair and eyes, good looking, steady, and in business.

HARRY D. by—"Madeline," twenty-one, 5ft. 2in., fair, dark blue eyes, good tempered, fond of home, and would make a good wife.

FRIZ W. and ANTHEA by—"Maud" and "Lora." "Maud," twenty-one, tall, graceful, fond of home, and a good housekeeper. "Lora," twenty, dark brown hair and eyes, fond of home, ladylike, domesticated, and would make a good wife.

LIONEL by—"Leonie," twenty-five, medium height, fair complexion, brown hair and eyes, domesticated, good tempered, and able to make home happy;—"Lucy," twenty-five, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes, dark, good tempered, and affectionate;—"R. E.," twenty-seven, a tradesman's daughter, very pretty, has expectations, and will make a good wife.

FREDERICK A. by—"H. R.," twenty-three, 5ft. 3in., hazel eyes, auburn hair, domesticated, good tempered, very respectable, and industrious;—"Annie S.," thirty, rather tall, brown hair and eyes, domesticated, and would make a fond wife and mother;—"M. E. J.," thirty-seven, of a happy disposition, good looking, and would make a good wife;—"Lizzie N.," a widow, thirty, has no children, would make "Frederick A." a loving wife and a good mother to his little girl;—"Augusta B. S.," thirty-one, medium height, dark, and a good housekeeper; and—"Evangeline," who is a widow with one girl, aged ten years.

"Evangeline" has a good home, but wants a husband to help her occasionally in her shop. She would make a loving mother to "Fred's" little girl if he were kind to her child.

The following cannot be inserted:—"William D." and "Walter M.," "Emily," "A. B. C.," "Amelia," and "Lizzie."

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